

Humour and Learning:
A Self-Study of My Practice as an Adult Educator

Joanna Samuels, B.A., B.Ed., CMF

Department of Graduate and Undergraduate
Studies in Education

Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Education

Faculty of Education, Brock University
St. Catharines, Ontario

© Joanna Samuels 2013

Abstract

This study examined my lived experiences as a frontline practitioner and adult educator in a local nonprofit community organization. Using self-study research methodology, I explored my professional practice as a facilitator of job search skills training with newcomers to Canada and the impact of humour on their learning, a topic for which I have a particular passion. To better inform my practice, I designed and delivered job search skills workshops on resume writing and cold-calling/networking. I used a variety of data sources including a literature review, personal observations, and reflections as well as secondary data sources from workshop evaluations and unsolicited feedback emails from participants. Findings from the self-study indicated that adult learners who experience entertaining and fun-filled lessons that use appropriate humour have better learning results, are more confident, and are better prepared to apply skills required for achieving career goals. Further, I learned in my practice that my challenge as an adult educator is to ensure humour is appropriately used and adds value to the learning rather than being the focus of the teaching.

Acknowledgments

This Major Research Project (MRP) would not have been possible without the help, support, dedication, guidance, advice, time, and professionalism of Dr. Loretta Howard, a wonderful MRP advisor. I would like to express thanks for her candor, clarity, insight, patience, and beyond-call-of-duty support during every step of this profound and meaningful educational experience.

Also, I am deeply grateful to my friend, colleague, and mentor Roy Savia for his dedication, guidance, and invaluable feedback through thick and thin. Without his relentless encouragement, and making sure that I didn't give up, I could not have finished my Adult Education Bachelor Degree at Brock University or the Master of Education at Brock University. His efforts to keep me focused have helped me embark on this challenging yet rewarding educational journey, and to continue to strive to reach my educational, career, and personal potential.

I also wish to thank a renowned and leading Brock University Professor, Dr. Joe Engemann, for taking time out of his crazy schedule to put in the extra effort to be a wonderful, insightful, and helpful second reader.

I would also like to acknowledge and thank the amazing administrators at Brock, in particular Dr. Renee Kuchapski, Chair and Associate Professor, Department of Graduate and Undergraduate Studies in Education at Brock University, and a big huge thank you to Lynn Duhaime for always making the time in her busy schedule to respond to my questions and requests!

Table of Contents

| | Page |
|---|------|
| Abstract | ii |
| Acknowledgments..... | iii |
| CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY | 1 |
| Background..... | 1 |
| Purpose and Focus | 4 |
| Research Problem and Rationale..... | 5 |
| Definitions | 7 |
| Research Questions | 8 |
| Limitations..... | 8 |
| Delimitations | 9 |
| Organization of the Self-Study | 9 |
| CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE..... | 11 |
| Benefits of Using Humour in Learning | 11 |
| Challenges of Using Humour in Learning..... | 20 |
| Humorous Techniques | 26 |
| Summary of the Literature..... | 28 |
| CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY | 30 |
| Research Design and Methodology..... | 30 |
| Profile of Workshop Participants | 31 |
| Data Collection | 32 |
| Data Analysis..... | 33 |
| Ethical Considerations | 33 |
| CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS | 34 |
| Major Theme: Positive Learning Environment | 34 |
| Ordinary Themes | 36 |
| Reflections and Observations of My Practice | 44 |
| Challenges | 46 |
| Summary of Findings | 48 |
| CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS | 50 |
| Summary of the Self-Study | 50 |
| Discussion of Findings | 53 |
| Implications for Best Practice | 56 |
| Recommendations | 58 |
| Further Research..... | 62 |
| Final Thoughts..... | 63 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| References | 65 |
| Appendix A: Resume Writing Workshop: IEP Architects | 73 |
| Appendix B: Cold-Calling Workshop: IEP Architects | 90 |
| Appendix C: Workshop Evaluation Form | 105 |

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Mother: Does your employment counsellor like you?

Son: Like me? She loves me. Look at all those X's on my job search workshop quiz!¹

In this major research paper, I examined my lived experiences as a frontline practitioner and adult educator in a local nonprofit community organization. Through self-study research (Allard & Gallant, 2012), I explored my professional practice as a facilitator of job search skills training with newcomers to Canada and the impact of humour on their learning. Specifically, I have a passion for this topic. This methodology allowed me to “examine what a meaningful learning experience was (for ourselves and indirectly for our students) and how this is or is not enacted in our practices” (Bullough & Pinnegar, as cited in Allard & Gallant, 2012, pp. 261-262). To better inform my practice, I used a variety of data sources including a literature review, personal observations and reflections, and secondary data sources from workshop evaluations and unsolicited feedback emails from the participants.

In the remainder of this chapter, I will present the background, purpose, and focus of the self-study, research problem and rationale, research questions to be addressed, as well as the limitations, delimitations, and the organization of the major research paper.

Background

This self-study research was motivated by my own experiences working as a frontline practitioner at a nonprofit community agency, where I have been employed for the past 8 years. The mandate of the agency is to help unemployed and underemployed clients who face numerous challenges and barriers while striving to achieve their

¹ Adapted from www.teacherjokes.com

educational, career, and employment goals. With a staff of approximately 200 people in eight locations in Toronto and York region, the organization is one of the largest in the sector. It provides employment and career counselling; language, communication, and job search skills training; job development programs and services; and a vocational and cognitive assessment centre. Government funds are the primary source of financing, although the organization also receives part of its funding through charitable donations from the private sector and United Way.

Over the past few years, I have witnessed a decrease in funding and increased competition to secure the limited government funding with the community organizations in this sector. With the funders more focused on program outcomes—specifically paid employment placements, client satisfaction, and enrollment targets—there is pressure on the frontline staff delivering the services and programs to meet these expectations each fiscal year. Funding and refunding is awarded to the organization that fulfills the government's mandate and target requirements. Failure to meet these outcomes, especially the employment placements, could result in program closures and funding cuts that in turn could lead to budget and staff cuts.

In my role as job developer, job coach, and facilitator, I have a caseload of about 50 internationally trained professionals and newcomers from diverse backgrounds and occupations. These individuals are registered in several government-funded newcomer employment support services delivered at my workplace. The clients are referred to me by the employment counselors because they are considered “job ready”—a term used in our agency to define clients who are potential paid placements. To clarify, the latter term refers to job seekers who have learned the employment skills that are required to achieve

their employment or career goals in the competitive labour market and, hopefully, have overcome their barriers to employment. This includes a clear employment goal, targeted resume, and interview skills presentation as well as a sufficient level of language and communication for the Canadian workplace and employers.

My mandate is to secure paid placements as quickly as possible for those on my caseload. I accomplish this by focusing on moving the clients into employment by networking extensively with the business world to connect the job seekers with as many relevant job and networking opportunities as possible and match the right applicant to the right job. I am often challenged to appease upper management's individual placement targets in order to meet the funders' requirements if the client does not have a targeted or suitable resume for his or her field or the interview skills to secure the job offer. The fastest way to secure employment for the clients is to meet the hiring needs of the employers. In spite of the talent and motivation of the majority of skilled immigrants looking for work, I often am unable to present the client to the employer for the job posting and struggle to meet the program placement targets.

As part of my career and professional development, motivation to improve the placement rates of my clients to meet funders' targets, and passion for helping the talented immigrants reach their career goals, I initiated, designed, and delivered occupational-specific and customized job search skills workshops to better prepare the newcomers to be "job ready." Using the standard curriculum template for the agency's job search skills workshops in the newcomer employment programs, I incorporated humorous techniques in the course content as well as in facilitation on topics that included resume writing, interview skills, labour market trends, the fundamentals of the

job search, and cold-calling/networking workshops. When I applied humour appropriately in the design and instruction of these job search workshops in a multicultural classroom at my workplace, I observed how this pedagogical technique elicited laughter from the group, and had a positive impact on their learning. I observed how the students were more engaged during the lesson by participating in the class discussions as well as in the activity. Typically, they would leave the workshops excited about their new knowledge and motivated to apply the skills. Many requested follow-up appointments with me for further assistance with their job search after the workshop and invited me to facilitate additional workshops.

Intrigued with this positive response, I was inspired to explore current practices and research on the impact of humour on learning. Through the Master of Education independent study course at Brock University, I began a journey in which I investigated this topic in greater depth. I discovered a wealth of studies that confirmed strong support for the use of humour when used competently as an important pedagogical tool as it facilitates effective learning for all ages and cultures (Wanzer, Bainbridge Frymier, Wojtaszczyk, & Smith, 2006). I realized that my role as a facilitator and frontline practitioner at my workplace offered me an exciting opportunity to further explore the impact of humour on learning as well as improve my professional practice through self-study research.

Purpose and Focus

The starting point for the self-study research was understanding the relationship between humour and learning as well as a personal need to study my practice and role in it. Although humour is a fundamental skill that should be a core component of teaching

and curriculum development, it is not used by any of the agency's several job search workshop instructors nor is it incorporated into the course content (Morrison, 2008). My broader goal is to move the self-study beyond my caseload by promoting understanding and encouraging other instructors at the agency to apply humor in their practice (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005).

Research Problem and Rationale

The new immigrants who participated in the job search workshops are part of my caseload and registered with a government-funded newcomer employment program delivered at my workplace. They are unemployed, internationally trained professionals seeking to integrate into the competitive local labour market in their fields. Most have multiple barriers to employment and face the typical obstacles that new immigrants experience with their job search in the first 4 years including: a lack of Canadian job experience; limited language and communication skills; lack of a professional network; confusion with the way the labour market works here; poor self-efficacy and self-esteem; psychosocial issues; and, sometimes, systemic discrimination (Schellenberg & Maheux, 2007). Additional challenges facing newcomers who are unemployed are status loss, unemployment and underemployment, and negative consequences on the new immigrants' psychological well-being and adaptation to Canada (Zeynep & Berry, 1996). In some cases, the talented newcomers are forced to find a "survival job" to pay their bills, a position that is not in their field.

Another obstacle in particular is the application of the new knowledge and skills taught in the pre-employment training and moving the theory to practice. Brigham and Gouthro caution educators who teach cross-culturally in regards to technology (delivery

and supports for students and staff), curriculum design and content, and assessment as follows: “This potentially one-dimensional context is more difficult for educators to ensure that students’ individual needs are addressed holistically” (as cited in Fenwick, Nesbit, & Spencer, 2006, p. 83).

Given that the facilitators and curriculum designers are more often than not “monocultural” educators in the multicultural classroom, including myself, they do not share the cultural, linguistic, or socioeconomic background of the students (Goddard & Foster, 2002, p. 2). For example, in my role as a facilitator, I observed how language barriers play a role in the lack of understanding of the workshop content when one of the participants was not able to follow the instructions of the lesson’s activity.

It is also difficult for many of the new immigrants to learn the principle of self-directed learning, a fundamental component of adult education as well as the approach of the job search workshop curricula at the agency. Brigham and Gouthro explained that this is

not always appropriate in a cross-cultural context as self-directed learning assumes that mature adults prefer to learn in more individualized contexts, and are often understood as good practice in Western cultures, but may not be appropriate in other cultural contexts. (As cited in Fenwick et al., 2006, p. 84)

In my experience as a facilitator and practitioner, these challenges are, more often than not, impediments to the newcomers’ learning of the required skills and being considered to be ready to be placed in employment. However, the positive and informal feedback that I received from the workshop participants through emails, evaluations, and discussions presented students who did learn some of the job search skills. I discovered

that using humour in the course content and instruction of the agency's pre-employment training workshops with newcomers, with sensitivity to the diversity of the adult learners in the multicultural classroom, has been one of the most successful teaching tools available to me as a facilitator and workshop designer. I have observed firsthand how the use of humorous video and cartoon clips, comics, jokes, stories, and comedy engages the students in the classroom through fun and laughter, builds rapport with the instructor, motivates the job seeker to continue to look for work following the program, and helps students to retain the new skills and knowledge. To add to these benefits, I noticed that the participants were more likely to continue communicating with me for further assistance with their job search efforts following the workshops. Accordingly, I felt it was important for me to examine humour in more detail.

Definitions

The job search skills workshop examined in this paper was one of the several government and nonformal training programs offered at my agency. Livingstone (2005) defines nonformal learning as “when learners opt to acquire further knowledge and skill by studying voluntarily with a teacher who assists their self-determined interests by using an organized curriculum” (p. 980).

This paper uses Banas, Dunbar, Rodriguez, and Liu's (2010) definition of humour as a communication of multiple, incongruous meanings that are amusing in some manner. In addition, the paper also adopts Booth-Butterfields's (as cited in Banas et al., 2010) definition of humour as both verbal and nonverbal communication behaviours that elicit positive responses like laughter.

Research Questions

To better understand the impact of humour on learning, I sought to answer the following research questions: (a) How does my use of humour in the design and facilitation of the job search workshops help or hinder the learning of the adult students from diverse backgrounds? (b) Does humour help my practice and performance?

Limitations

This self-study is based on my work experiences at the nonprofit community agency from 2011-2013, focusing on my role as a job developer, job coach, employment counsellor, and job search skills workshop facilitator. It is also an extension of the independent study paper that I prepared previously for the Master of Education program. In understanding the role humour plays in adult learning in this self-study, the limitation is primarily that the paper speaks to my lived experiences and cannot be generalized to other situations (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005).

Additionally, I am not a new immigrant and am limited in my understanding of the challenges and barriers they are facing with securing employment in the competitive labour market. However, I am sensitive to the issues of unemployment through my work as a frontline practitioner and having been unemployed and underemployed for several years.

Another limitation of the research is my preference to apply humour in my practice with clients both individually and in groups. Since I am studying my own practice, I needed to pay attention to any undetected biases, values, and assumptions from past and current experiences and observations (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). Therefore, a degree of flexibility in my opinions are required in order for me to critically review the

comments reported by the participants in the workshop feedback emails as well as to be open to varying perspectives in order to locate contradictions with the research problem (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005).

In addition, the self-study was limited to my observations and lived experience with the clients on my caseload who were participating in my workshops. I was not able to interview the participants or the staff and management for their feedback and perspectives on using humour.

Delimitations

Since self-study required a transparent research process which clearly and accurately documents the research process, it is important as a self-study scholar to have a “deep commitment to checking the data and interpretations” (Hamilton & Pinnegar, as cited in Lunenberg & Samaras, 2011, p. 847) with my advisor and second reader to “broaden possibilities and challenge the perspective to increase the credibility and validity” (Hamilton & Pinnegar, as cited in Lunenberg & Samaras, 2011, p. 847) of my work. Transparency requires me to be open, honest, and reflective about my work (Lunenberg & Samaras, 2011).

Organization of the Self-Study

The self-study research contains five chapters. In the following chapter, I explore the literature related to my research. I examine the information on the impact of humour and learning, including the benefits and challenges in pedagogy as well as techniques and applications. Chapter 3 discusses the research design and methodology, and chapter 4 analyzes the findings gathered from my personal reflections and observations as well as

the secondary sources. Chapter 5 presents the discussion, implications for practice, and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

You know the world is going crazy when the best rapper is a White guy, the best golfer is a Black guy, the tallest guy in the NBA is Chinese, the Swiss hold the America's Cup, France is accusing the U.S. of arrogance, and Germany doesn't want to go to war ~ Chris Rock (as cited in Hodson, Rush, & MacInnis, 2010, p. 546).

The literature reviewed in this chapter is the foundation for this self-study and contains three sections that support the key points of the paper. The first section reviews the main body of literature that explores the benefits of using humour in pedagogy and its impact on learning. The second section discusses the challenges of humour in teaching, and the third presents techniques on applying humour in facilitation. I focused on peer-reviewed journals, books, and conference papers from the field of traditional pedagogy and adult education, as well as traditional, online, and critical pedagogy corresponding specifically to humour and learning. Also, I sourced content for the paper and workshop curriculum from the Internet, newspaper clippings, and magazines.

Benefits of Using Humour in Learning

The literature examined for this self-study presented a strong case for using humour to improve learning. Although most of the authors concurred that more research is needed in this area, the majority of the evidence recommended “developing and delivering instructional plans with more humour-oriented teaching and materials, applied appropriately by the facilitators” (Morrison, 2008, p. 18).

The following benefits were identified in the sources regarding the use of humour in the instruction and curricula design in adult education. It is a teaching tool that contributes to the students' learning as it creates a positive learning environment, builds

rapport with the instructor, enhances critical and creative thinking, and fosters motivation and engagement in the classroom. Humour also has physiological and psychological rewards that contribute to the retention of the new materials.

Positive Learning Environment

According to Vuori, Price, Mutanen, and Malmberg-Heimonen's (2005) study on job-search training workshops with unemployed adults, there are five basic techniques of group training that job seekers can learn and contribute to their job search success. The elements described by Vuori et al. include:

Active teaching and learning methods to engage the learners, skilled trainers who build trust and facilitate active and supportive group processes that promote learning of the skills and tasks; a supportive and positive learning environment, a key ingredient for new learning and facing the challenges of the job market; and preparation for setbacks by teaching job seekers problem-solving processes to cope with stress related to unemployment and the job search process and keeping the job seeker motivated. (p. 262)

When used competently and appropriately in pedagogy, humour supports the five elements posited by Vuori et al. (2005), which are reported in the research examined below. Morrison (2008) described how humour is a tool that creates a fun and positive learning environment. Students' comprehension and participation is expanded, which furthers the students' learning. Because of these benefits, Morrison was adamant that humour be a fundamental skill that should be a core component of teaching and curriculum development, and educators should maximize the use of humour to create an

“optimal learning environment, to build safe communities that reflect the trust necessary for collaborative learning” (p. 7).

Dormann and Biddle (2006) researched educational computer games and concluded that using humour creates a more enjoyable and effective educational experience as it enhances motivation and trust. Since learning occurs through involvement and enjoyment, engaging in humour and laughter enhances social interactions such as friendship, trust, or sympathy and sharing laughter creates a positive emotional atmosphere, which is crucial for a successful learning experience.

Building Rapport With the Facilitator

Students’ perception of the learning environment can influence their participation and well-being (Creed, Bloxsome, & Johnston, 2001). Supportive and encouraging interpersonal relationships in pre-employment training classroom between the trainer and the trainee are associated with better well-being and confidence, implying that trainers and training providers need to be cognizant of the association between their training climate and well-being levels for their unemployed participants” (Creed et al., 2001, p. 300).

The majority of research reviewed for this project on traditional classroom pedagogy confirmed that humour is a key interpersonal resource for building and maintaining rapport between the adult learner and teacher (Lawson, 2001). Humour enhances the quality of the student–teacher relationship and produces higher teacher evaluations and a more enjoyable and effective educational experience (Shatz & LoSchiavo, 2006). Further, according to Shatz and LoSchiavo’s (2006) study of online pedagogy, humour bridges the gap between the student and teacher, allowing students to

view the instructor as more approachable. They reported on how award-winning educators encourage the use of humour to create an inviting classroom environment, relieve stress, improve attention, stimulate participation, and enhance learning.

Wanzer et al. (2006) demonstrated that the most competently used humour by professors related to course material. Torok, McMorris, and Lin (1999) identified the five most popular types of humour deemed positive and appropriate for use by educators: funny stories, funny comments, jokes, and professional humour; the fifth most popular type was sarcasm, which was the most frequently used and recommended type of humour. Dormann and Biddle (2006) also recommend the use of YouTube video clips as well as entertaining and educational games and quizzes.

Personality of the Instructor

Building rapport with the instructor depends on the personality of the instructor, and humour is a “hit-or-miss affair and rests on the comedic skills (innate or acquired) of the teacher which is limited and on shaky ground” (Lawson, 2001, p. 18). Lawson (2001) reported that the facilitator plays a significant role in the use of humour and laughter with the adult learners, and noted that some teachers are more naturally humorous than others.

The dilemma is whether educators can be trained to use humour effectively in the classroom. Contrary to Lawson (2001), James (2001) believes that humour can be taught and is not innate. Although he wrote about online courses, the same can apply to the traditional classroom. James stressed the need for educational institutions to consider, experiment with, and create legitimate ways to incorporate humour into online classes as it is one of the major traits of the best, most effective teachers. This is a topic that warrants more research.

Critical Thinking

In their 3-year study on how curricula of vocational training can be refined to maximize job placements and retention with “chronically unemployed” job seekers, Tango and Kolodinsky (2004) indicate that

career course teachers may do well to help participants in the vocational training workshops become more articulate in understanding nuances of their personalities, the personalities of their potential employers, and how these dynamics play a role in job finding and in keeping work. (p. 90)

The job skills training curriculum that resulted in the most job placements was the one that focused on increasing the participants’ self-knowledge and clarity of career goals (Donohoe & Patton, as cited in Tango & Kolodinsky, 2004). The gaining of self-efficacy (Bandura’s approach) improved the job seekers’ job search activity and participation in the workshop (Eden & Aviram, as cited in Tango & Kolodinsky, 2004).

A fundamental element of adult education is the development of critical thinking skills by educators and students, which enables learners to “understand and evaluate arguments, and to act logically to evaluate situations, solve problems and make decisions” (Harper, 1997, p. 200). Harper encourages students and teachers to become “not merely performers or enthusiastic promoters of difference, but critical self-reflective scholars of difference” (p. 200). To expand on this issue, Brookfield (2006) urges teachers to adopt critical reflection and thinking in their practice. Brookfield recommends that model such “skillful teaching” behaviour with the students by viewing their own actions from different perspectives as much as possible (p. 26).

Parke (2004) posits that humour can stimulate discussion and nurtures equal participation that is vital to the formulation of new roles, ideas, and new awareness leading to the critical reflection process, a fundamental element of transformative learning. Holmes and Marra's (2006) studies on leadership and humour in the workplace reported that humour has a creative component and enhances a transformational approach to leadership as it is always intended to amuse, strengthen friendships, soften an instruction or a criticism, and release tension or defuse anger. For the learners in the multicultural class, humour is an important tool that teachers could use to provide "a conduit for creative and revolutionary response to problems, contests old assumptions, and questions established ways of doing things, an attribute of effective leaders" (Parke, p. 166).

Dougherty (as cited in Macgillivray, 2005) demonstrated how using humour in political cartoons in the classroom can help students learn how to think critically and get excited about current political issues. By using the cartoons from the renowned television cartoons series *South Park*, Macgillivray (2005) teaches his students to draw on many cultural and political symbols, understand the cultural context from where the cartoon is positioned, and analyze the cartoon within the context of other current political issues.

Psychological and Physiological Benefits

Unemployment is associated with decreases in psychological well-being and unemployed individuals have elevated psychological distress, more depression, and lower confidence than people who are employed (Creed et al., 2001). The participants in the job search workshops who are newcomers to Canada demonstrate a loss of self-esteem as they have lost their former occupational status (Creed et al., 2001).

New Canadians dealing with the anxiety of resettlement stress and a job search might benefit from physiological benefits of humour as described by Morrison (2008), Berk (2002), and Lawson (2001). In an extensive analysis of using humour effectively and appropriately in traditional pedagogy, Morrison, a comedian and author in her own right, reports on how humour is a well-documented tension-reducing tool in the classroom. She discusses the compelling data from the medical field linking humour, health, and cognitive connections. Humour and laughter contribute to the mind/body balance and Morrison reports on research that shows laughter relieves pain, reduces stress, and improves the immune system. This can aid learning through improved respiration and circulation, lower pulse and blood pressure, and the release of endorphins into the bloodstream. Some healing effects of laughter include the reduction of anxiety, relief from stress, and increase in mental sharpness—all desirable in pedagogical settings (Garner, 2006).

Participants in Frenzel, Pekrun, and Goetz's (2007) study of middle school students' perceptions of the classroom environment experienced a wide range of emotions in the context of learning and achievement. Frenzel et al. reported that emotions are highly relevant and important in learning and achievement outcomes. Weiss (2000)

referred to an appropriate metaphor when she states that “emotion is an unconscious biological thermostat” (p. 46) which drives attention, learning, memory, and problem-solving behaviours; the more emotionally engaged a learner is, the more likely he or she is to learn. In addition, Weiss concluded that humour, along with surprise and mystery, is an important technique which fosters emotional connections that helps learners connect the new information with what they already know.

Creative Thinking

Since learning occurs through involvement and enjoyment, engaging in humour and sharing laughter contributes to creativity, social interactions, and divergent thinking—the ability of the brain to bring together diverse ideas that will generate the thinking necessary for complex problem solving (Morrison, 2008). These are crucial elements for a successful learning experience (Dormann & Biddle, 2006; Garner, 2006; Morrison, 2008). Risk-taking is the “nucleus of creativity and of humour and has the ability to alert the attention centre of the brain and increase the likelihood of memory storage and long term retrieval” (Morrison, 2008, p. 17). As a result, “there is an increased level of comprehension and cognitive retention, and of equal importance, a more enjoyable class for the students” (Garner, 2006, p. 178). There is a consensus amongst most of the researchers that sharing humour and laughter about critical or difficult subjects is an important coping mechanism. It helps facilitate adult learning and satisfaction, and comprehension of the subject is improved (Berk, 2002; Parke, 2004).

For example, Garner (2006) cites that the application of metaphors in teaching can enhance the learning process by creating vivid imagery which creates a less intimidating environment that is more relaxed and allows the students to become better

listeners. As a result, “there is an increased level of comprehension and cognitive retention—and of equal importance—a more enjoyable class for the students” (Garner, 2006, p. 178).

Motivation and Engagement

Cratenon advocates for a “holistic ‘person-centred’ approach to cultural and personal development, coupled with transferable work skills” (as cited in Gray, 2000, p. 310) in vocational skills training of unemployed adults on social assistance in London, England. Cratenon encourages forms of training that will help trainees develop their self-esteem, self-confidence, and capacity for lifelong learning. Shackleton (as cited in Gray, 2000) argued that employers continually emphasized the need for key skills and for attitudes such as self-confidence and adaptability in job applicants, rather than specialized vocational competencies. Robinson stressed the importance of helping unemployed job seekers receive job search skills training that enhances their “personal transferable skills” such as communication and self-motivation” (as cited in Gray, 2000, p. 309).

The studies examined for this major research paper confirmed that using humour in pedagogy creates a more enjoyable and effective educational experience which enhances motivation and trust. This information supports the recommendations examined above. Humour helps to create a more enjoyable and effective educational experience and enhances motivation and trust (Dormann & Biddle, 2006). Since learning occurs through involvement and enjoyment, engaging in humour and laughter enhances social interactions such as friendship, trust, or sympathy and sharing laughter creates a positive emotional atmosphere which is crucial for a successful learning experience (Dormann & Biddle, 2006). An effective teaching strategy in the traditional classroom, humour is an

educational lubricant that can make learning more engaging, enjoyable, and memorable (Shatz & Coll, as cited in Anderson, 2011).

Challenges of Using Humour in Learning

A wealth of studies focus on the positive consequences of using humour in the classroom. Often humour is considered to be an educator's "most powerful resource to achieve a wide range of beneficial educational outcomes including controlling problematic behavior, increasing group cohesion and coping with stress and in facilitating foreign language acquisition" (Banas et al., 2011, p. 116). Banas et al. (2011) stress that as long as the educator is sensitive to the diversity of the learners, humour is an important teaching tool.

The use of humour in and of itself does not automatically result in a positive effect; it is a pedagogical instrument that may constitute a "double-edged sword" that is capable of improving or harming the classroom learning environment depending on its employment by the educator (Askildson, 2005; Banas et al., 2011). Inappropriately applied in teaching, humour can foster racism, discrimination, oppression, and exclusion.

In the literature reviewed, there were three main challenges with using humour in the design and instruction facilitation of curricula. To create and support an inclusive, socially just, and safe learning environment, it is important to understand the diversity in the classroom, the personality of the instructor, the harmful nature of racist and oppressive humour, and the structures of power and authority in pedagogy.

Diversity in the Classroom

Educators are challenged with using humour in teaching because it is situated in contexts, and complex factors enter into its production and use (Dormann & Biddle,

2006). Dormann and Biddle (2006) studied the use of computer games in the classroom and found that the communication goal, target audience factors, and genre of humour (used by the teacher in this case) all influence the cognitive, affective, and behavioural responses of recipients of the humour (the students).

Shatz and LoSchiavo (2006) discuss the different implications of using inappropriate humour in online and traditional classroom contexts:

The instructor's delivery (timing, non-verbal gestures) can signal an impending joke and potentially minimize any negative reactions and students provide immediate feedback whether the humour is appropriate or not. Online learning, humour cannot be embellished by non-verbal cues or easily retracted. Instructors must be more careful in considering how they would like to use humour and consider how the students might react before adding humour to the online course.
(p. 7)

Garner (2006) stresses that humour can be complicated because it may be highly personal, subjective, and contextual and the teacher cannot always predict the way it will be received. Garner suggests that students have diverse interpretations of what they find humorous due to differences in temperament, personal inherited characteristics, learning styles, and life experiences (for example, parenting and friends).

Culture, ethnicity, religious, and racial differences play an important role in determining what is the appropriate use of humour in teaching. Not all cultures respond to humour in the same way. Certain cultures may not recognize humour as socially acceptable (White, 2000). Brookfield (2006) cautions that when using humour, it is important for teachers to understand that students have:

different patterns of communication and with diversity in the classroom—race, class, gender, learning styles, intelligence differences, and personalities—what to one person is a permissible question according to the standards of critical inquiry is rude, bigoted and hurtful to another. (p. 123)

It is important for educators to consider gender differences—men and women respond differently to humour—when using humour and how students perceive the use of humour (Morrison, 2008). Morrison (2008) uses the example of males scoring higher than females on aggressive and self-deflating humour. Duncan, Smeltzer, and Leap (1990) stated that men prefer sexual humour and women have a greater appreciation for nonsense and the absurd. In addition, students' perception of humour differs according to the gender of the professor (Torok et al., 1999).

Bell's (2007) mixed-methods study approached humour from an intercultural communication lens; while the "occurrence of humour is universal, what is considered funny, as well as when, where, with whom and under what conditions a person may joke, differs cross-culturally and even between individuals of a shared culture" (p. 28). Bell cites that learners for whom English is their second language often do not understand or even misunderstand and misinterpret the jokes due to confusion over humour in cross-cultural communication and, therefore, they can be offended. Humour has an implicit negative message and can be potentially dangerous to use as it is culturally and linguistically complex and sophisticated. "While the occurrence of humour is universal, what is considered funny, as well as when, where, with whom, and under what conditions a person may joke, differs cross-culturally and even between individuals of a shared culture (Raskin, as cited in Bell, 2007, p. 28). Teslow described how "styles of humour

are culture-dependent” and “some of the most substantial differences between cultures are in the content of humour and perception of what is funny” (as cited in Banas et al. 2010, p. 128).

An example of the harmful nature of inappropriate humour in a cultural context corresponds a high school science teacher in Moses Lake, Washington who was suspended for making a derogatory remark about LDS (Mormon) Church-owned Brigham Young University. The teacher was quoted as saying, “I didn’t say it to be offensive to the Mormon faith ... I sure do regret it. I’ve never been out to hurt anybody’s feelings” (“Teacher Who Made BYU Joke,” 2007, para. 11). The teacher also noted that 52 students approached him after his suspension to tell him that he was “the best science teacher they’ve ever had” (para. 14). The news report noted that professors at Brigham Young University said the comment was “a common joke among Mormons, but many wouldn’t appreciate others using it” (para. 16). As one professor pointed out, “if you’re an insider you can joke about things that are different if an outsider says it” (para. 18).

Racist and Offensive Humour

Garner (2006) stipulates that humour should be used carefully as it can impede communication and social interactions in a pedagogical setting. Garner warns that some forms of humour that violate classroom norms may be perceived as inappropriate, while other forms of humour will be perceived as appropriate. Garner’s findings indicate that postsecondary students found the most offensive use of humour used by the professor involved targeting a specific student based on variety of reasons, including appearance, gender, religion, or intelligence.

Further, offensive humour can create a range of negative behaviours including humiliation, distrust, and feelings of insensitivity that can result in a low rating of instructors by students (Parke, 2004).

Disparaging Humour

According to Wanzer et al. (2006), inappropriate humour is as complex as racism as there are different forms and types. As leading authorities on humour research in the postsecondary classroom, Wanzer et al. reported that university students identified four types of inappropriate humour most used by the professors—disparaging humour targeting students, disparaging humour targeting others, offensive humour, and self-disparaging humour—and included jokes, puns, riddles, sarcasm, physical antics, nonverbal behaviours, cartoons, and one-liners.

Terrion and Ashforth (2002) report that disparaging humour can encourage racism and the inequitable treatment of oppressed and marginalized groups. Terrion and Ashforth explain that using humour and putdowns to make fun of others (which may include persons, things, or institutions) perceived as being weak elevates the aggressors' position at the target's expense and at targets that are not well-liked. Further, the more disliked the target, the funnier the putdown, which can manifest as an insult, demeaning or sexist joke, teasing, sarcasm, or self-deprecating remarks that play an important role in maintaining the status quo, power, and status relationships (Duncan et al., 1990; Terrion & Ashforth, 2002). Duncan et al. (2002) explain that putdowns are usually directed at unpopular members or low status out-groups as a means of “differentiating oneself or one's group from another and elevating the self or group at the other's expense” (p. 257).

Berk (2002) recommends that teachers incorporate guidelines in their instructional materials that address offensive humour, including a list of categories or types of offensive humour that could be discussed with students beforehand. Such a list would automatically affect the class atmosphere and set the tone for a safe learning environment. Berk, a humorist and author, defines offensive humour as a behaviour that is offensive to the individual and his or her subjective interpretation. In other words, teachers should adhere to this “rule of thumb: any word, object, or action that violates a person’s values, moral principles, or norms of behavior would be offensive” (Veatch, as cited in Berk, 2002, p. 12).

Stereotyping

Olson, Maio, and Hobden (1999) posit that disparaging jokes in the workplace perpetuates and strengthens stereotyping against the targeted group. This type of offensive humour can be directed at many groups including ethnic, religious, gender, and occupational groups, and is typified by humorous cartoons and jokes that play on negative stereotypes about the group. I would caution instructors in the job search workshops to be aware of their own stereotyping and biases first in order to avoid the pitfalls of inappropriate and offensive humour in instruction and workshop curricula.

Power and Authority

The personality of the facilitator plays a significant role in the use of humour and laughter with the adult learners. According to Lawson (2001), humour is a “hit-or-miss affair and rests on the comedic skills (innate or acquired) of the teacher which is limited and on shaky ground” (p. 18). Some teachers are more naturally humorous than others, and some educators use negative humour to vent their frustration, hostility, fears, and

anger towards the system on the students (Morrison, 2008). Morrison (2008) notes that sarcasm and mockery can become the weapon of an educator who feels powerless and results in the recipient feeling helpless and vulnerable.

Sev'er and Ungar's (1997) research on the use of humour with professors and students at the University of Toronto demonstrated that "power imbalances under the auspices of humour are seen as reinforcing old belief systems, blocking social change, and preserving inequality" (p. 88). These power differentials between the students and instructors can render the former vulnerable because classrooms are unegalitarian situations (Paludi, as cited in Se'ver & Ungar, 1997, p. 90).

Wanzer, and Bainbridge Frymier (1999) and Parke (2004) conducted other research on university students and claimed that professors who use offensive humour (e.g., sexual comments and jokes, vulgar verbal and nonverbal expressions, and humour dealing with drinking alcohol) can create a range of negative behaviours including humiliation, distrust, and feelings of insensitivity which can result in a low ratings in instructor evaluations.

Humorous Techniques

Many of the academics, who were also teachers, recommended effective humorous techniques that instructors can apply in the curriculum and instruction. LoSchiavo and Shatz (2005) present selected examples of relevant and effective humorous techniques that can be used for online lectures and exams. The researchers provide guidelines for educators to incorporate humour including visual humour (cartoons, illustrations, and photographs) and funny quotes, jokes, examples, and word-play.

Another tactic to add humour and laughter in instruction is to post funny quotations from magazines, the Internet, or from the students or teachers (Tamargo-Weaver & Wilson, 1997). *Reader's Digest* or other comical websites (e.g., bestfunnyquotes.com) are some suggested sources for humorous material. Tamargo-Weaver and Wilson (1997) cautioned academics to be careful with their selection of quotes which could put someone down because “humour should always be a way to laugh with other people and not at others” (p. 112).

Powers (2005), who studied the use of humour in traditional pedagogy, recommended that educators research their topic on the Internet and find relevant humorous materials on the discipline. Powers explains that using clips from comedic movies and television shows brings course concepts to life. As an educator, he invited teachers to illustrate obsessive compulsive disorders in a psychology course by viewing a popular television show (*Monk*) whose main character suffers from this symptom. Powers also suggested that instructors use themselves as examples to explain concepts: “If you have a funny story that can help explain a concept, tell it. ... Such self-disclosure helps create an open atmosphere in the class” (Use Yourself as an Example section, para. 1).

For the purpose of the self-study, I applied the suggestions from Berk (2002) and Parke (2004) who demonstrated how funny cartoons, quotes, letters, and personal anecdotes can add zest and relevance to learning and are essential to instructional effectiveness. For example, I began one of my workshops using Donna Summer's (1983) popular song related to work titled “She Works Hard for the Money” that had been requested by the students. As recommended by Berk, I inserted jokes, funny comic strips, and cartoons from the newspapers and Internet to emphasize a point about each job

search skill. I used entertaining visuals and sound effects in the PowerPoint presentations and announcements.

Summary of the Literature

Most of the body of literature reviewed confirmed that humour benefits the learner and educator and has a positive impact on learning when used competently and appropriately in pedagogy. It secures student attention, expands student comprehension and participation, builds rapport between the teacher and student, creates a nurturing and fun environment for learning, fosters creativity and divergent thinking, promotes health and well-being, supports classroom management, and enhances motivation and trust (Dormann & Biddle, 2006; Morrison, 2008).

It is also evident in studies on humour that it can also be detrimental to the classroom environment (Struthers, 2011). One of the challenges educators need to consider when using humour as a pedagogical tool includes being sensitive to the diversity of the learners. Humour can also be misused and create an unsafe learning environment for students. Inappropriate use of this tool can include racist and disparaging humour and reinforcing the power and authority dynamics between the teacher and student. It is highly recommended that educators understand their students' needs, differences, and preferences, including gender, racial, ethnic, and cultural dynamics as well as personality, learning styles, inherited characteristics, and life experiences (Struthers, 2011).

The research presents different techniques and strategies to apply humour in curriculum, content, and delivery to help with the learning. For the purposes of this self-study and to better understand my practice and the impact of humour on learning, I

incorporated humorous techniques recommended by the literature reviewed into the curriculum and instruction of the job search workshops. There is a disagreement amongst the researchers as to whether educators can be trained to use humour effectively in the classroom or whether it is innate.

Although most academics in the field concur that further investigation on the impact of humour on learning is required, much of the evidence recommends “developing and delivering instructional plans with more humour-oriented teaching and materials, applied appropriately by the facilitators” (Morrison, 2008, p. 18).

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The job coach is droning away in the resume writing workshop when he notices an adult learner sleeping way up in the back row. The job coach shouts to the sleeping student's neighbour, "Hey wake that student up!" The neighbour yells back, "You put him to sleep, you wake him up!" (Adapted from "Funny Teacher Jokes," 2013)

In this chapter, I describe the research design, methodology, data collection, and analysis as well as the ethical considerations that I used to conduct the self-study of my lived experiences and practice of using humour and its impact on learning.

Research Design and Methodology

According to Macintyre Latta and Buck (2007), self-study positions us to confront self-understanding of the nature of teaching in order to develop an increased awareness and understanding of our practice to improve our skills and performance. This approach is the key to our professional development and reflects our desire to do more than deliver courses in teacher education in order to extend the learning beyond the self so that others might benefit (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001; Macintyre Latta & Buck, 2007). The methodology fits the goals and purpose of my study.

Best described by Creswell (2010), I turned the lens on my own practice as a workshop facilitator and job developer by studying my own situation. I was able to reflect on what I learned—a form of self-development—as well as experiment with my own practice, monitor the actions and circumstances in which they occur, and then interpret the action as a basis for future action (Creswell, 2010).

In my capacity as facilitator and job developer and as part of the self-study experience, I redesigned and facilitated the agency's standard 3-hour job search skill

training workshops on resume writing and cold-calling/networking. I customized the curriculum to meet the learning objectives and needs of the clients on my caseload, who were from the architecture sector and newcomers to Canada. I applied the humorous techniques in the content and instruction outlined by the researchers reviewed in chapter 2, including visual humour (cartoons, illustrations, and photographs) and funny quotes, jokes, examples, and anecdotes (Berk, 2002; LoSchiavo & Shatz, 2005; Parke, 2004). The first lesson covered resume writing for which 17 clients attended, and the second workshop covered cold-calling and networking, which 14 clients attended. I have attached the two workshop curricula in Appendices A and B.

Profile of Workshop Participants

The workshop participants were adult learners and skilled immigrants who arrived in Canada less than 5 years ago from Iran, Russia, Israel, Colombia, and the Philippines. Unemployed and internationally trained and experienced from the architecture and information technology fields, the individuals were focused on looking for work in their chosen professions. The clients were part of my caseload since they were registered with one of the several government- and United Way-funded employment programs specialized for newcomers that are delivered by the agency at my workplace. All the participants possessed similar traits and characteristics having arrived in Canada less than 5 years ago, are permanent residents, and have a minimum of a bachelor's degree as well as experience in architecture and information technology and related sectors. The English language proficiency skills of the immigrants have been assessed in advance as a prerequisite to enter into the job skills training program, and they are considered by the Canadian Language Benchmark as sufficient for the Canadian workplace setting. The

context for the self-study was in a training room located at my workplace site, one of the organization's seven locations in Toronto and York region.

Data Collection

Also known as critical self-study, I focused on a program and activity involving individuals rather than a group, and I identified shared patterns of behaviour (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001; Stake, as cited in Creswell, 2010). Data were collected from three sources: formative feedback about the workshops through existing secondary sources, unsolicited emails from the participants, and my personal reflections and observations situated in the multicultural classroom in my role as facilitator and job developer.

On two separate occasions, I facilitated two 3-hour workshops on resume writing and cold-calling/networking skills to two separate groups of newcomers on my caseload at the site of my workplace. Each lesson concluded with the distribution of the agency's standard workshop evaluation form used across the agency with all training programs in order to gather clients' feedback for the funders and upper management. The feedback form is part of the agency's procedures used to improve services, and it is both anonymous and optional for the learners to complete.

In addition to the required agency feedback form, I regularly collected formative feedback about the workshop to better inform my practice. The formative feedback is completed at the learner's discretion and is composed of two Likert-scale statements: (a) I found the workshop fun and entertaining; and (b) The humorous clips, cartoons, and comics helped me with my learning. The template of the evaluation form is shown in Appendix C.

Thirty-one workshop participants provided me with formative feedback at the end of the workshops on the use of humour. Additionally, I received 10 unsolicited emails

from workshop learners providing further feedback in the days following the workshop. Following the workshops, I engaged in critical self-reflection regarding my observations about the facilitation of the workshop and my use of humour.

Data Analysis

The data from the evaluation forms as well as my personal reflections and observations were interpreted according to the literature reviewed in chapter 2. I analyzed the information in terms of major and ordinary (or expected) themes that emerged from the data and were most frequently reported to support the research question and topic (Creswell, 2010). The findings were reported in a narrative discussion. Further, the grammatical and spelling errors that appeared in the content of the emails and evaluation comments from the clients were reported in the themes below. A more in-depth analysis of the findings is presented in the next chapter and will be reported in a narrative discussion.

Ethical Considerations

In order to understand the phenomenon, I played the role of a “participant observer” in this self-study (Creswell, 2010, p. 214). To clarify, I actively engaged in research that involved using my own observations and reflections based on my experiences as a facilitator of the workshop sessions. Following Creswell’s (2010) advice, an ethical issue to consider in my self-study is the confidentiality and privacy of the workshop learners and their participation and conversations during the lessons as well as the emails and evaluations that could be “off the record” (p. 231). To ensure confidentiality, the evaluations and emails are kept in a locked drawer when not in use and the names will not be used at any time in this paper.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

The facilitator asks the adult learner, “Why can’t you ever answer my questions?” The student responds back, “Well, if I could, there wouldn’t be much point of me being here!” (Adapted from “Funny Teacher Jokes,” 2013)

In this chapter, I present an analysis and interpretation of my self-study findings in comparison to the literature reviewed in chapter 2. Specifically, I identified one major theme and four ordinary themes that surfaced from the data sources (Creswell, 2010). The major theme was that humour used in teaching (the workshop curriculum and instruction) fostered a positive learning environment. Further, I identified the following four ordinary themes that I expected to find as a researcher and through the data sources (Creswell, 2010): (a) humour helped to build rapport with the teacher; (b) humour helped to motivate and engage the students; (c) humour helped with creative and critical thinking; and (d) humour helped with the retention of new knowledge. These findings will be reported in a narrative discussion which summarizes, in detail, the findings from my data analysis (Creswell, 2010). Finally, I will discuss the evidence based on my personal reflections and observations of my practice as a job developer and facilitator.

Major Theme: Positive Learning Environment

According to Vuori et al. (2005), a supportive and positive learning environment is a key ingredient for new learning and facing the challenges of the job market. There was an abundance of evidence in the literature examined in chapter 2 that supported the benefits of using humour in pedagogy. Morrison (2008) was one of the many academics who described how humour is a tool that creates a fun and positive learning environment and expands students’ comprehension and participation. Because of these positive

outcomes, Morrison insists that humour is a fundamental skill that should be a core component of teaching and curriculum development and that educators should maximize the use of humour in education to create an “optimal learning environment, to build safe communities that reflect the trust necessary for collaborative learning” (2008, p. 7).

Although all authors concurred that more research needs to be done in this area, most recommended “developing and delivering instructional plans with more humour-oriented teaching and materials, applied appropriately by the facilitators” (Morrison, 2008, p. 18) with adult learners.

This major theme was supported in the content of the workshop participants in the formative feedback and emails that reinforced the research. There was an overwhelming response from the adult learners that they had a positive learning experience. Both of the following examples that demonstrate this theme are from two unsolicited emails that I received from the participants:

- Dear Joanna,

Thank you for your wonderful and energetic class which give me personally lots of ideas on my résumé. I am sure that one day I will email you and tell you about the success I have got due to all you and your wonderful colleagues have done for me. Hope you success and all the best.

- Hi Joanna,

Thanks for the very useful presentation today on Cold Calling techniques. May we please have a copy of the PowerPoint? Many thanks!

The responses presented in the workshop evaluation forms also provided examples of the contribution of humour to a positive learning environment. All of the 31

learners who participated in two workshops (14 attended the resume writing and 17 attended the cold-calling/networking) completed the forms. Twenty respondents indicated a “strongly agree” (5) and 11 responded “agree” (4) to the statement “I found the workshop informative.” Twenty-five students indicated a “strongly agree” to the statement “I gained useful skills from the workshop,” and six responded “agree” to the same question.

The formative feedback statements supported this major theme. For example, the first statement—“The humorous clips, cartoons, and comics helped me with my learning”—received 20 “strongly agree” and 11 “agree.” The other statement—“I found the workshop fun and entertaining”—received an overwhelming “strongly agree” from 22 students, an “agree” from six students, and three had “no opinions.” It is possible to infer from these findings that the majority of my clients connected with my use of humour in the workshop and experienced a positive learning environment.

Ordinary Themes

The following four themes that emerged from the data were ones that I expected to find as a researcher, and coined by Creswell (2010) as ordinary themes: (a) humour helped to build rapport with the teacher, (b) humour helped to motivate and engage the students, (c) humour helped with creative and critical thinking, and (d) humour helped with the retention of the new knowledge.

Building Rapport With the Teacher

The majority of research reviewed for this project on traditional classroom pedagogy confirmed that humour is a key interpersonal resource for building and maintaining rapport between the adult learner and teacher (Lawson, 2001). Lawson

(2001) describes it perfectly: “humorous banter informally before class between teacher and student is important for interpersonal construction in the classroom with the adult learner” (p. 16).

Building rapport with the instructor depends on the personality of the instructor, and humour is a “hit-or-miss affair and rests on the comedic skills (innate or acquired) of the teacher which is limited and on shaky ground” (Lawson, 2001, p. 18). Lawson (2001) notes that the facilitator plays a significant role in the use of humour and laughter with the adult learners, and adds that some teachers are more naturally humorous than others.

Shatz and LoSchiavo (2006) and Wanzer et al. (2006) demonstrated in their research that there is a positive association between humour orientation and communication competence. The appropriate use of humour in the classroom improves perceptions of the teacher and enhances quality of the student–teacher relationship, with the result in higher teaching evaluations and a more enjoyable and effective educational experience.

My self-study clearly revealed that the humour used in the lesson and in my delivery contributed to my efforts to build rapport with the students. To concur with the research examined, the following email excerpts are examples that support this theme.

Both participants requested further assistance from me following the workshop:

- I wonder if I may lean further on your generosity. I am currently setting up my calling card and struggling to come up with a logo or branding by-line that defines me. It’s much easier when you have a business and you are selling your service/product. Would it be possible to look at some sample calling cards if you have any? All help is appreciated.

- Hi Joanna! I hope you're doing great. I attended one of your workshops at JVS last November 13 with Internationally Trained Architects, and I thought you did an awesome job. I hope you can add me to your professional network on LinkedIn. Thank you and have a good day.

Some of the feedback from the workshop evaluations demonstrated how my use of humour in instruction contributed to the teacher–student rapport. Out of the 31 adult learners, an overwhelming majority (25) rated “Strongly Agree” in responding to the Likert scaled statement that “The facilitator was (a) well prepared, (b) clear, (c) worked well with the group, and (d) was engaging,” while the other six marked “agree.”

The content in the comment sections in the evaluation forms presented additional examples to support this ordinary theme. Below are some of the responses to the statement “The part of the workshop I liked best”:

- “She learned us with her energetic voice”
- “Joanna’s humor and how she presented the workshop”
- “Joanna answering the questions in a proper and detailed way”
- “Joanna’s direct practical approach”
- “The best part is Joanna herself”

Motivation and Engagement

The research confirmed that using humour enlivens the classroom discussion and experience, especially in the case of my clients who are facing the hardships of resettlement and barriers to unemployment. Humour helps to create more enjoyable and effective educational experience and enhances motivation and trust (Dormann & Biddle, 2006). Since learning occurs through involvement and enjoyment, engaging in humour

and laughter enhances social interactions such as friendship, trust, or sympathy and sharing laughter creates a positive emotional atmosphere which is crucial for a successful learning experience (Dormann & Biddle, 2006). Humour is an effective teaching strategy in the traditional classroom, an educational lubricant that can make learning more engaging, enjoyable, and memorable (Shatz & Coll, as cited in Anderson, 2011).

The following three emails substantiated this theme as they illustrated the students' engagement and motivation with the job search process following the workshop:

- Thank you for a great presentation at the workshop on Tuesday and the follow up sample resumes, much appreciated. I wonder if I may lean further on your generosity. I am currently setting up my calling card and struggling to come up with a logo or branding by-line that defines me. It's much easier when you have a business and you are selling your service/product. Would it be possible to look at some sample calling cards if you have any? All help is appreciated.
- Hi Joanna,

Thank you for the fantastic workshop on resume writing for architects. You were very helpful. I was wondering if you could please send me the PowerPoint file that you showed us at the workshop. Thank you again for your help and support.
- Hi Joanna,

Thank you for the very useful presentation today on Cold Calling techniques.

May we please have a copy of the PowerPoint? Many thanks!

The comments from the participants in the workshop evaluations provided additional support for the use of humour in my practice as these data demonstrated how it

contributed to motivating and engaging the clients to participate in their job search. For example, the following responses to the form statement “One of the most important things I learned from this workshop” illustrate this theme:

- Branding and targeting my resume and experiences
- That I need to re-do my resume
- Interview tips and do not have a functional resume
- Make good accomplishment statements correctly
- Accomplishments in resumes, format of resume
- To articulate what we’ve done till now and how to brand ourselves
- How to focus on analyzing the job post first
- We are part of the business. Business based on money, profits and self-interests

Creative and Critical Thinking

With both ordinary and overlapping themes, the current research on education considered creative and critical thinking skills as a couple of the several benefits of using humour in the classroom. Since learning occurs through involvement and enjoyment, engaging in humour and sharing laughter contributes to creativity, social interactions, and divergent thinking—the ability of the brain to bring together diverse ideas that will generate the thinking necessary for complex problem solving (Morrison, 2008). Risk-taking is the “nucleus of creativity and of humour and has the ability to alert the attention centre of the brain and increase the likelihood of memory storage and long term retrieval” (Morrison, 2008, p. 17). All of the aforementioned points are crucial elements for a successful learning experience (Dormann & Biddle, 2006; Garner, 2006; Morrison, 2008).

Parke (2004) posited that humour can stimulate discussion and nurture equal participation that is vital to the formulation of new roles, ideas, and new awareness leading to the critical reflection process, a fundamental element of transformative learning. For the learners in the multicultural class, humour is an important tool that teachers could use to provide “a conduit for creative and revolutionary response to problems, contests old assumptions, and questions established ways of doing things, an attribute of effective leaders” (Holmes & Marra, 2006, p. 166).

Developing critical thinking skills in a job search is an important tool for the new immigrants to learn in order to be successful with securing employment. Being able to re-evaluate and customize their resumes and efforts to attain their employment goals requires creative thinking as well. An example of these ordinary and overlapping themes were illustrated in one participant’s email: “Thank you for your wonderful and energetic class which give me personally lots of ideas on my résumé.”

Further support for the influence of humour on creative thinking (as well as the other ordinary themes) in the content of the formative feedback form was illustrated in a response to the statement “The part(s) of the workshop I liked best was ‘the rebranding part which encouraged us to think of it.’”

Retention

Researchers presented in the self-study agree that sharing humour and laughter about critical or difficult subjects are important coping mechanisms. It helps to facilitate adult learning and satisfaction, and “there is an increased level of comprehension and cognitive retention, and of equal importance, a more enjoyable class for the students” (Garner, 2006, p. 178).

Emotions are highly relevant and important in learning and achievement of outcomes (Weiss, 2000). Regarding the physiological and psychological benefits of humour on retention, Weiss (2000) cites that “emotion is an unconscious biological thermostat” (p. 46) which drives attention, which in turn learning, memory, and problem-solving behaviours; the more emotionally engaged a learner is, the more likely he or she is to learn. Weiss concluded that humour, along with surprise and mystery, is an important technique which fosters emotional connections that helps learners connect the new information with what they already know. In summary, the more emotionally engaged a learner is, the more likely he or she is to learn and connect with the new information (Weiss, 2006).

The results of the data substantiated the literature review of this benefit and positive outcome of the use of humour on learning. The next group of emails shown below are examples of this theme in which students found the information useful for their job search and learned new knowledge that they were able to apply to their job search.

- Dear Joanna

I would like to offer my appreciation and thanks to you for your presentation that was held today in JVS office. Your workshop, really, was very useful, and the sequence of information was very interesting. I learned many things from that workshop. I wish you more successful in your work and thank you for your efforts.

- Thank you so much for your helpful instructions and powerful way of teaching. Me myself learnt important tips from your effective class. I think, it's because of

your deep insight through the issue. I would definitely go through your guidance as well as bojana. Also thank you for attachments.

A further instance of this theme was found in the clients' comments to the statement in the evaluation form: "The part(s) of the workshop I liked best were":

- resume writing do's and don'ts
- the YouTube video by Kimberly Bishop
- emphasis on analyzing the job posting re-shape the resume to suite it
- the rebranding part which encouraged us to think of it
- advert [analyze] posting

Reflections and Observations of My Practice

This section examines my development as a self-study researcher. I believe that my personal views can never be kept separate from interpretations and personal reflections about the meaning of the data in this paper (Creswell, 2010). These interpretations were based on my memory of the experiences in the workshops, as well as my hunches, insights, and intuition from working as a frontline practitioner in this field for 8 years (Creswell, 2010).

A key incident in the development in my practice as an adult educator took place during the resume writing and cold-calling/networking workshops. I observed each class as they collaborated in teams of five during the activity section of the lesson and how the individuals were engaged in the learning and applied creative thinking. The activity in the resume writing workshop was to prepare two accomplishment statements for the resumes in a small group within 15 minutes and then present them to the class. The cold-calling/networking workshop required the participants to prepare a cold-calling script to approach employers for job opportunities. Given the diversity of the newcomers (including their backgrounds, cultures, religions, languages, learning styles, genders, and personality differences), I was pleasantly surprised to observe how the students worked together diligently and effectively through brainstorming. Each group applied the new skill of analyzing job postings and preparing accomplishment statements that they learned in the resume writing class and the breakdown of the cold-calling script that they learned in the cold-calling/networking session. Only two out of five groups volunteered to present to the class at the end of each workshop. All of the major and ordinary themes explored above emerged in the classroom in spite of the limited time of the activity and

the lesson. My lived experience in this case demonstrated to me that one of the most important roles of a facilitator in a multicultural classroom was to create a positive, fun, respectful, and safe environment that was conducive to learning for the students from diverse backgrounds.

Another issue raised in my self-study was that humour is a requisite part of adult education. My experience has shown me that humour helped the students with their learning. Those individuals who had fun and laughed in my class were more likely to apply the new material as well as be engaged and motivated in the workshop and in their job search. My experience has shown me that the majority of the workshop participants have continued to communicate with me after the workshops providing additional evidence that humour does build rapport between the teacher and student.

The success of my workshops started an increased number of requests from clients for me to facilitate more job search workshops as well as provide them with additional, one-on-one help with their job search after the course. Further, some participants attended my resume writing and cold-calling workshops on more than one occasion. After the managers reviewed the positive evaluations and email testimonials, they invited me to continue to design and deliver occupation-specific job search skills workshops for new groups of clients at my workplace as well as for other newcomer language and employment programs delivered at community partner agencies such as the settlement agencies and their English language training classes (known as LINC). I received additional requests from other job search skills workshop facilitators at my workplace to share my curriculum, of which they incorporated some content into their lessons.

Challenges

In the literature reviewed in chapter 2, there was an abundance of research on the negative impact and challenges of using humour inappropriately in teaching and education. However, I was unable to identify any negative feedback through emails and evaluations or observe any challenges in the classroom experience from the participants regarding my use of humour in the content or instruction. The workshops' evaluation feedback forms provided an opportunity for clients to articulate any discomfort, challenges, or negative responses with their learning experiences through the following statement: "The part(s) of the workshop I liked least were." Six out of 31 participants completed this section. The responses referred primarily to the difficulties of the activity rather than the learning environment. For example:

- the group task
- the accomplishment statements in the group
- resume writing
- the lack of load (loud) speakers
- none
- the repetitive, classic informatin
- nil
- The subject itself
- The job search quiz

My self-study raised the issue that humour may be an important part of learning, but some of the new immigrants in the class had difficulties understanding the material of the workshop and therefore had challenges with the humour. Not all cultures respond to

humour in the same way. Bell (2007) explored this issue with ESL students through an intercultural communication lens; while the “occurrence of humour is universal, what is considered funny, as well as when, where, with whom, and under what conditions a person may joke, differs cross-culturally and even between individuals of a shared culture” (p. 28). Bell indicated that learners for whom English is their second language often do not understand or even misunderstand and misinterpret the jokes due to confusion over humour in cross-cultural communication and therefore can be offended. Bell notes that humour has an implicit negative message and can be potentially dangerous to use as it is culturally and linguistically complex and sophisticated. Raskin posits that “While the occurrence of humour is universal, what is considered funny, as well as when, where, with whom, and under what conditions a person may joke, differs cross-culturally and even between individuals of a shared culture” (as cited in Bell, 2007, p. 28). Teslow explained how “styles of humour are culture-dependent” and “some of the most substantial differences between cultures are in the content of humour and perception of what is funny” (as cited in Banas et al., 2011, p. 128).

The lack of negative feedback from my clients could be attributed to the power imbalances and differences between the students and instructors in the classroom that can “render the former vulnerable” (Paludi, as cited in Se’ver and Ungar, 1997, p. 90). Educators need to be aware of the risk of power abuse; Paludi cautions academics about the power dimension against “unchecked use of humour, because classrooms are un-egalitarian situations” (as cited in Se’ver and Ungar, 1997, p. 90).

When I reflected on my practice for the self-study, I observed the power dynamics between the teacher and students. In my work, the clients on my caseload are eager to

please me, and they meet with me because they believe that I am their ticket to employment. I have noted that they believe that I have the connections and clout with the employers and, therefore, I have the power and authority to determine their success with employment. Often, the job seeker will refuse to meet with the employment counselor (which is mandatory in the program) and request an immediate appointment with the job developer. This dynamic could have deterred the workshop participants from providing any negative or critical feedback in their classroom behaviour, emails, and evaluation forms with their learning experience and the use of humour.

Summary of Findings

Humour is a critical part of learning in adult education. The theory in the literature reviewed was well-supported by the findings from my self-study research. One major theme and four ordinary themes emerged from the data that demonstrated the benefits of using humour in teaching. Based on my personal reflections and observations of my practice that applied humour in the curriculum and facilitation of two job search skills workshops, all of the 31 participants had a positive learning experience, confirming this major theme. The four ordinary themes were identified through the content of the evaluation forms and emails. The students, who were newcomers to Canada and on my caseload, retained the new material and found the lesson to be engaging, motivating, and fun. One participant reported that the workshop helped with creative thinking on the resume. Most of the adult learners requested to continue communicating and working with me following the workshop.

The challenges of using humour inappropriately in pedagogy was covered in the literature review. Difficulties with learning due to language and intercultural

communication barriers, as well as power imbalances between the teacher and students, were some of the negative consequences of using humour in teaching that I uncovered in my practice through the self-study research.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

How many employment counselors does it take to change a lightbulb? One. But the lightbulb has to want to change. (Adapted from “Funny Social Workers Jokes,” 2013)

In this chapter, I will provide a summary of the self-study, discuss the key issues that emerged, present implications for practice and further research, and conclude with my final thoughts.

Summary of the Self-Study

In this paper, I examined my lived experiences as a frontline practitioner to understand the impact of humour on learning with adults who are new immigrants. Through self-study research, I expanded on understanding my practice through a variety of data sources including the literature review and my personal observations and reflections as a curriculum designer and facilitator of job search skills training workshops that applied humour. I also used secondary sources to gather data from the agency’s standard workshop evaluations and unsolicited feedback emails from the participants.

The self-study research was motivated by my own experiences working as a frontline practitioner at the nonprofit community agency where I have been employed over the past 8 years. The mandate of the agency is to help the clients who face numerous challenges to and barriers with achieving their educational, career, and employment goals. Government funds are the primary source of financing, although the organization also receives part of its funding through charitable donations from the private sector and the United Way.

My role is to provide individual and group employment support services and training to unemployed and underemployed clients with barriers to employment who are

from diverse backgrounds and occupations and are part of my caseload. My responsibilities include job development, job coaching, employment and career counseling, and facilitation of job skills workshops for newcomers.

In my capacity as a job developer, my caseload consists of clients who are referred to me by the employment counselors because they are considered “job ready”—a term used often in our agency to define clients who are potential paid placements—a job seeker who has learned the employment skills that are required to achieve his or her employment or career goal in the competitive labour market and, hopefully, has overcome the barriers to employment.

In my capacity as a frontline practitioner, my mandate is to secure paid placements as quickly as possible for those on in my caseload to meet the program mandatory outcomes, specifically paid employment placements. I am often challenged to appease upper managements’ individual placement targets in order to meet the funders’ requirements. Often the client referred to me does not have a suitable resume or understanding of the interview or job search process in order to achieve his or her employment goal or job offer. In spite of the talent and motivation of the majority of skilled immigrants looking for work, I am unable to present the client to the employer for the job posting.

As part of my career and professional development and motivation to increase my paid placement targets, and with the approval of my manager, I initiated, designed, and facilitated occupation-specific and customized job search skills workshops to the clients on my caseload. Using the standard curriculum template for the agency’s job search skills workshops in the newcomer employment programs, I incorporated humorous techniques

in the course content as well as in my instruction in resume writing, interview skills, labour market trends, the fundamentals of the job search, and cold-calling/networking workshops. The participants were internationally trained professionals and are newcomers to Canada from the architecture sectors on my caseload.

When I applied humour appropriately in the design and instruction of these job search workshops in a multicultural classroom at my workplace, I observed how this pedagogical technique elicited laughter from the group and had an impact on their learning. There was evidence based on my observations that the students were more engaged during the lesson by participating and involved in the activity. Typically, they would leave the workshops excited about their new knowledge and motivated to apply the skills as well as follow up with me requesting individual appointments for further help with their job search as well as requests for additional job search skills workshops.

Intrigued with this positive response and the impact of humour and laughter on the performance of the clients' job search, I explored the literature on current practices and research on this topic. I noted that there was strong support for the use of humour when used competently as an important pedagogical tool as it facilitates effective learning for all ages and cultures (Wanzer et al., 2006). I realized that my role as a facilitator and frontline practitioner at my workplace, the nonprofit community agency, offered me an excellent opportunity to further explore the impact of humour on learning and my own practice through self-study and, perhaps, address the challenges of the agency's various employment program's desired paid placements outcomes mandated by the funders.

For my self-study, and with approval of the manager, I designed and facilitated two 3-hour job search skills workshops on resume writing and cold-calling/networking with a total of 31 participants who were clients on my caseload at the nonprofit community agency. The adult learners were unemployed internationally trained professionals and newcomers to Canada from the architecture field. The instruction and course content used humorous techniques following the recommendations of Berk (2002) and Parke (2004), which included funny comics and cartoons, quotes, video clips, and personal anecdotes.

To inform my practice for the self-study, I used data sources that included my personal reflections and observations as a facilitator and job developer at my workplace; the agency's standard workshop evaluation forms, with two additional formative feedback questions; and unsolicited emails with feedback from 10 workshop participants. I compared the findings with the literature reviewed in chapter 2. I addressed the following two research questions in order to better understand the impact of humour on learning and to improve my practice: (a) How does my use of humour in the design and facilitation of the job search workshops help or hinder the learning of the adult students from diverse backgrounds? and (b) Does humour help my practice and performance?

Discussion of Findings

I presented, as the findings of the self-study, one main theme and four ordinary and expected themes that emerged from the data that supported the research questions and the literature research reviewed. The key issues presented the benefits of using humour in teaching and its positive impact on learning. I provided evidence in the data collected from the customized workshop evaluation forms, the unsolicited feedback

emails from the participants, and my personal reflections and observations as the facilitator. These topics are reviewed in the following section.

Benefits of Humour in Adult Learning

As noted in the literature reviewed and uncovered in the themes that emerged through the data sources, humour created a positive learning environment in the multicultural classroom. Applied appropriately, humour and laughter build rapport between the teacher and student; foster engagement, motivation, and creative and critical thinking; and help with the retention of the new material in the classroom. For the purpose of my self-study, the adult learners were inspired by the workshop to apply their new skills (through revising their resumes and preparing and practicing cold-calling scripts) and increase their efforts with their job search. There is strong evidence to support that teachers should develop and deliver instructional plans with more humour-oriented teaching and materials, and applied appropriately by the facilitators with adult learners (Morrison, 2008).

Negative Outcomes and Challenges

In the literature reviewed in chapter 2, there was an abundance of research on the negative impact and challenges of using humour inappropriately in pedagogy. I did not observe any direct negative responses or learning experiences in the classroom or in the content of the evaluations and emails. However, in the evaluation, there was an opportunity for clients to articulate any challenges and negative experiences in the statement “The part(s) of the workshop I liked least were.” The comments primarily referred to difficulties with the activity part in the workshop.

This self-study exploration provided me with an opportunity to reflect on my practice through an intercultural lens (Bell, 2007). Humour may be an important part of learning, but some of the new immigrants in the workshop struggled with understanding the material and activity. This challenge was not revealed by the participants, but could have impacted their responses to my use of humour. To reiterate a point made by Bell (2007), learners for whom English is their second language often do not understand or even misunderstand and misinterpret the jokes due to confusion over humour in cross-cultural communication, and therefore they can be offended. According to Bell, humour has an implicit negative message and can be potentially dangerous to use as it is culturally and linguistically complex and sophisticated.

To reiterate Paludi's remarks and the self-study limitations described in chapter 1, another assumption for the lack of negative feedback from my clients could be attributed to the power imbalances and differences between the students and instructors in the classroom that can "render the former vulnerable" (as cited in Sev'er & Ungar, 1997, p. 90). Educators need to be aware of the risk of power abuse against "unchecked use of humour, because classrooms are un-egalitarian situations" (Sev'er & Ungar, 1997, p. 90).

When I reflected on my practice for the self-study, I observed the teacher-student power dynamics in my practice. In my work, the clients on my caseload are eager to please me and meet with me because they believe that I am their ticket to employment. Often, they believe that I have the connections and clout with the employers and, therefore, the power and authority to determine their success with employment. I have observed cases when the clients refused to meet with the employment counselor (which is mandatory in the program), and request an immediate appointment with the job

developer. This dynamic could have deterred the workshop participants from providing any negative or critical feedback in their classroom behavior, emails, and evaluation forms with their learning experience and the use of humour.

Implications for Best Practice

My self-study experience enabled me to better understand my practice. Brookfield (2006) proposes that a “core tenant of skillful teaching” and the most important knowledge we need to do good work as teachers is a consistent awareness of how students are experiencing their learning and perceiving our teaching (p. 3). Applying Brookfield’s comment to my practice and the research reviewed for this paper, I am convinced now more than ever that humour is an important pedagogical tool and best practice that plays a critical role in assessing students’ learning.

In response to the two research questions presented in this self-study, humour applied with sensitivity to the learners’ diversity, in the design and facilitation of the job search workshops, helps the adults to learn the skills required. To summarize the findings, the benefits of humour in pedagogy are that it creates a positive learning environment; builds rapport between the teacher and student; fosters creativity, critical thinking, engagement, and motivation; and helps with the retention of the new material. Humour can also present some challenges to learning due to the barriers of language and power dynamics in the classroom, especially with students who are new immigrants. Further, humour in my practice helps keep me and the classroom awake and alert, and consequently, the clients have better outcomes with learning and applying the job search skills.

According to Brookfield (2006), an optimal learning environment is one within which the teacher is authentic by being open and honest in her attempts to help students learn:

An authentic teacher is one that students trust to be honest and helpful. She is seen as a flesh and blood human being with passions, enthusiasms, frailties, and emotions, not as someone who hides behind a collection of learned role behaviours appropriate to the title “professor.” Authentic teachers are personally liked and often consulted concerning all manner of student problems. (pp. 56-57)

As an adult instructor, I value being true to myself and authentic , while displaying credibility through a “high-level command of content and skill” (Brookfield, 2006, p. 62). Humour has contributed to both of these traits. I have always had a preference for using humour. Being able to laugh at myself, talk about my own struggles as a learner and educator, and “respond[ing] capably to unexpected situations” and funny incidents in the classroom has opened up the students’ minds for learning through laughter (Brookfield, 2006, p. 61). The physiological and psychological benefits outlined by Morrison (2008) earlier in this paper reported include the fact that humour and laughter are well-documented tension-reducing tools in the classroom, which is substantiated by compelling data from the medical field linking humour, health, and cognitive connections.

The data clearly illustrated that as long as the facilitator respects the diversity of the learners and the content is focused on relevant information, humour in the curriculum and instruction can have positive outcomes in adult pedagogy. Humour is an effective teaching tool that can help create a fun, safe, and positive educational environment that

reduces the stress and anxiety of most of the learners. The results could lead to a more motivated and engaged job seeker who better retains the new materials and information. A more motivated job seeker with improved job search skills can improve performance and be closer to attaining his or her employment goal. Consequently, these results can contribute to the program and agency's mandated job placement and client registration targets mandated by the government funders.

Recommendations

Three main recommendations have emerged from my self-study and will be discussed below. These include: (a) to redesign the job search skills workshop curricula with humorous techniques and guidelines delivered at the agency, (b) to train the trainers to apply humour in their instruction, and (c) to design and deliver targeted diversity awareness training for job search skills workshop instructors.

Redesign the Curriculum

Teacher training should encourage teachers or teacher candidates to develop instructional plans with more humour-oriented teaching materials and to learn about the skills and methods of successfully using humour in the classroom (Wanzer et al., 2006). To prevent or avoid any of the challenges and possible negative outcomes of inappropriate humour in the workshops, I would follow Berk's (2002) recommendations that teachers incorporate in their instructional materials and instruction guidelines of offensive humour. At the beginning of each course, Berk lists categories or types of humour that could offend the students. That list automatically affects the class atmosphere and sets the tone for a safe environment (Berk, 2002). Berk defines offensive humour as a behaviour that is offensive to the individual and his or her subjective

interpretation. A standard procedure for the classroom is that “any word, object, or action that violates a person’s values, moral principles, or norms of behavior would be offensive” (Veatch, as cited in Berk, 2002, p. 12).

In addition to integrating the humour techniques as outlined in chapter 2 in the job search training workshops’ curricula at the agency, I recommend that the designers apply Vuori et al.’s (2005) five basic techniques of group training in job-search training workshops with unemployed adults. When used competently and appropriately in pedagogy, humour supports Vuori et al.’s elements which include

Active teaching and learning methods to engage the learners, and skilled trainers who build trust and facilitate active and supportive group processes, promote learning of the skills and tasks; a supportive and positive learning environment that is a key ingredient for new learning and facing the challenges of the job market; and preparation for setbacks by teaching job seekers problem-solving processes to cope with stress related to unemployment and the job search process as well as keeping the job seeker motivated. (p. 262)

Training the Trainer

According to Evans (1996), explaining, training, modeling, and practicing are required to help staff acquire new skills. Evans emphasizes the importance of tailoring the training to the current knowledge practice and felt needs of the teacher.

As an adult educator, I realized how effective humour can be in adult learning and pedagogy, especially with diverse learners, through the results of this self-study. I would suggest that the facilitators’ training courses include learning to develop instructional plans with more humour-oriented teaching materials, whereby teachers learn about the

skills and methods of successfully using humour in the classroom (Wanzer & Bainbridge Frymier, 1999; Wanzer et al., 2006).

It is necessary to understand that the personality of the facilitator plays a significant role in the use of humour and laughter with the adult learners. Some teachers are more naturally humorous than others. I would be classified as the former. The challenge is whether or not instructors can be trained to use humour in the classroom. I concur with James (2001) who called for the need for educational institutions to consider, experiment with, and create legitimate ways to incorporate humour into online classes because it is one of the major traits of the best and most effective teachers and a trait that all teachers should want to hone, practice, and nurture, regardless of the medium.

Through the exploration of my self-study, one of the challenges I have noted with the delivery of the standard job search workshops at my agency is that humour is not a core component of teaching and curriculum development (Morrison, 2008). I concur with Morrison (2008) and with Lawson (2001) who strongly believe that humour can be taught, but is a neglected topic for continuing professional development. Lawson expands this idea that humour can be learned through understanding and staff development, and can be used as a significant behaviour in a learning environment.

To review Cratenon's recommendations discussed in chapter 2, forms of training are encouraged that would help trainees develop their self-esteem, self-confidence, and capacity for lifelong learning (as cited in Gray, 2000, p. 310). Robinson stressed the importance of helping unemployed job seekers receive job search skills training that enhances their "personal transferable skills such as communication and self-motivation"

(as cited in Gray, 2000, p. 309). As noted earlier in the literature review, humour can assist both instructor and student with these core competencies required in the job search.

Diversity Awareness Training

The typical instructor of the job search skills training workshops at the agency are “monocultural” educators in the multicultural classroom. The reality is that we do not share the cultural, linguistic, or socioeconomic backgrounds of our students (Goddard & Foster, 2002, p. 2). Humour can be complicated because it may be highly personal, subjective, and contextual, and the teacher cannot always predict the way it will be received (Garner, 2006). Further, humour can either enhance critical pedagogy or it can be detrimental to the classroom environment (Struthers, 2011).

Through diversity training programs, educators can learn to apply humour which is sensitive to students’ diverse interpretations of what they find humorous due to differences in temperament, personal inherited characteristics, learning styles, intelligence differences, and life experiences (for example, parenting and friends) (Garner, 2006). Many of the adult learners, as in my caseload, are new immigrants from diverse backgrounds, cultures, and languages who may also have different personalities, genders, learning styles, and ages. The challenge is to design and facilitate curricula that apply humour to create and support an inclusive, socially just, and antiracist learning environment in which all new Canadian students feel safe to learn and grow professionally and personally.

Diversity awareness and training programs can help teachers use humour in a competent way. These initiatives can help educators to understand the positive and

negative influences of humour and laughter in their multicultural classrooms in order to create an inclusive, antiracist, and safe learning environment for all students.

Further Research

This self-study led to other research questions that could be explored in the future. One question that emerged was the need to explore the use of humour in adult education with adult learners who are newcomers to Canada and in the multicultural classroom. Many factors could have influenced the participants' responses and behaviours in the workshops and in the evaluations and emails. In addition to the time constraints of the workshop, the differences played a significant role, including their race, socioeconomic status, learning styles, past education, other agency programs and supports, ethnicity, personality differences, religion, gender, and environment. A longitudinal qualitative study would be helpful in order to conduct interviews with each participant to capture a more reliable and valid realistic experience with her or his learning and its connection with humour. Using random sampling and a larger sample of newcomers to Canada from various professionals could be examined in future studies. Further, the participants were part of my caseload, which could have restricted their honesty in their responses in the evaluations as a result of the language barriers and the teacher-student power and authority dynamic. It would be interesting to see the results of a qualitative case study conducted with a facilitator who is objective and from another employment program.

This self-study leads to deeper questions about humour training. Can an adult educator be taught how to use humour effectively in the design and instruction of curriculum? Is this a quality or competency that is possible to learn with training? Is it a learned behaviour or is it innate? Lawson (2001) and Morrison (2008) believe that

humour can taught, but it is a neglected topic of professional development. I recommend conducting in-depth research on this issue as well as what needs to be done to improve teachers' use of humour in pedagogy.

Final Thoughts

In this self-study, I explored my own practice and development as an adult educator. Through the literature reviewed, the data sources and reflections and observations of my practice, I confirmed that humour is an effective teaching tool as it improves learning and performance for all ages as long as it is applied appropriately and sensitively for the sake of the learners (Wanzer & Bainbridge Frymier, 1999; Wanzer et al., 2006).

In my professional practice, I have observed the effects of a rapidly changing and complex economy and labour market on the efforts of internationally trained newcomers in government-funded vocational programs to secure sustainable employment in their fields. Being unemployed as well as new to Canada with an array of barriers to employment takes a heavy toll on their self-esteem, confidence, and self-worth. The prospects of finding a job in their profession in Toronto is becoming increasingly more competitive and difficult today than it was in the past. I believe that the use of humour in job-search skills training programs not only supports the job search process but also serves as an outlet for clients' frustration, stress, and anxiety resulting from unemployment or underemployment. These talented professionals are often burdened with resettlement stress as well as barriers, such as language and lack of a professional network, to securing sustainable employment in their fields.

Humour is needed now more than ever in the standard job search workshops delivered at the agency as government funders continue to decrease funding but increase target requirements for paid placements and client registration.

To conclude, I believe that with entertaining and fun-filled workshops using humour appropriately, adult learners will have better learning results and more confidence and will be better prepared to apply the skills required for achieving their career goals. It is not a new concept that everyone likes to have fun and laugh regardless of their background and culture. What I learned in my practice is that my challenge as an adult educator is to ensure that the humour is appropriately used and adds value to the learning instead of being the focus of the teaching.

Furthermore, from the evidence in the literature and observations from my work, I would go one step further to encourage other instructors to use humour in their training, and to incorporate this important pedagogical tool in job development with employers and clients as well.

References

- Allard, A. C., & Gallant, A. (2012). Is this a meaningful learning experience? Interactive critical self-inquiry as investigation, *Studying Teacher Education: A Journal of Self-Study of Teacher Education Practices*, 8(3), 261-273.
- Anderson, D. (2011). Taking the “distance” out of distance education: A humorous approach to online learning. *Journal of Online Learning and Teaching*, 7(1). Retrieved from http://jolt.merlot.org/vol7no1/anderson_0311.htm
- Askildson, L. (2005). Effects of humor in the language classroom: Humor as a pedagogical tool in theory and practice. *Arizona Working Papers in Second Language Acquisition and Theory*, 12, 45-61. Retrieved from <http://w3.coh.arizona.edu/AWP/AWP12/AWP12%5BAskildson%5D.pdf>
- Banas, J., Dunbar, N., Rodriguez, D., & Liu S. J. (2010). A review of humour in educational settings: Four decades of research. *Communication Education*, 60(1), 115-144. doi:10.1080/03634523.2010.496867
- Bell, N. (2007). How native and non-native English speakers adapt to humor in intercultural interaction. *International Journal of Humor Research*, 20(1), 27-48. doi:10.1515/HUMOR.2007.002
- Berk, R. (2002). *Humor as an instructional defibrillator: Evidence-based techniques in teaching and assessment*. Sterling, VA: Stylus.
- Brookfield, S. (2006). *The skillful teacher: On technique, trust, and responsiveness in the classroom*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Bullough, R. V., & Pinnegar, S. (2001). Guidelines for quality autobiographical forms of self-study research. *Educational Researcher*, 30(3), 13-21.

- Creed, P., Bloxsome, T., & Johnston, K. (2001). Self-esteem and self-efficacy outcomes for unemployed individuals attending occupational skills training programs. *Community, Work & Family*, 4(3), 285-302.
- Creswell, J. W. (2010). *Educational research: Planning, conducting and evaluation quantitative and qualitative research* (4th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill Prentice Hall.
- Dormann, C., & Biddle, R. (2006). Humour in game-based learning. *Learning, Media and Technology*, 31(4), 411-424.
- Duncan, W., Smeltzer, L., & Leap, T. (1990). Humor and work: Application of joking behavior to management. *Journal of Management*, 16(2), 255-278.
doi:10.1177/014920639001600203
- Evans, R. (1996). *The human side of school change*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Fenwick, T., Nesbit, T., & Spencer, B. (2006). *Contexts of adult education: Canadian perspectives*. Toronto, ON: Thompson Educational.
- Frenzel, A., Pekrun, R., & Goetz, T. (2007). Perceived learning environment and students' emotional experiences: A multilevel analysis of mathematics classrooms. *Learning and Instruction*, 17, 478-493.
doi:10.1016/j.learninstruc.2007.09.001
- Funny teacher jokes. (2013). In *WorkJoke*. Retrieved from
<http://www.workjoke.com/teachers-jokes.html>
- Funny social worker jokes. (2013). In *Workjoke*. Retrieved from
<https://www.workjoke.com/social-workers-jokes.html>

- Garner, R. L. (2006). Humor in pedagogy: How ha-ha can lead to AHA! *College Teaching*, 54(1), 177-179. doi:10.3200/CTCH.54.1.177-180
- Goddard, J. T., & Foster, R. (2002). Adapting to diversity: Where cultures collide—Educational issues in Northern Alberta. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 27(1), 1-20.
- Gray, A. (2000). The comparative effectiveness of different delivery frameworks for training on the unemployed. *Journal of Education and Work*, 13(3), 307-325. doi:10.1080/713676994
- Harper, H. (1997). Difference and diversity in Ontario schooling. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 22(2), 192-206.
- Holmes, J., & Marra, M. (2006). Humor and leadership style. *Humor: International Journal of Humor Research*, 19(2), 119-138. doi:10.1515/HUMOR.2006.006
- Hodson, G., MacInnis, C.C., & Rush, J. (2010). Prejudice-relevant correlates of humor temperaments and humor styles. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 49, 546-549.
- James, D. (2001). A need for humor in online courses. *College Teaching*, 52(3), 93-94. doi:10.3200/CTCH.52.3.93-120
- Lawson, W. (2001). Engaging with humor. *Adults Learning*, 12(8), 15-18.
- Leedy, P., & Ormrod, J. E. (2005). *Practical research: Planning and Design* (8th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.

- Livingstone, D. W. (2005). Expanding conceptions of work and learning: Research and policy implications. In N. Bascia, A. Cumming, A. Datnow, K. Leithwood, & D. Livingston (Eds.), *International handbook of educational policy* (pp. 977-995). New York: NY: Kluwer.
- LoSchiavo, F., & Shatz, M. (2005). Enhancing online instruction with humor. *Teaching of Psychology*, 34(4), 246-248.
- Lunenberg, M., & Samaras, A. (2011). Developing a pedagogy for teaching self-study research: Lessons learned across the Atlantic. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 7(5), 841-850.,
- Macgillivray, I. (2005). Using cartoons to teach students about stereotypes and discrimination: One teacher's lessons from South Park. *Journal of Curriculum and Pedagogy*, 2(1), 133-147. doi:10.1080/15505170.2005.10411533
- Macintyre Latta, M., & Buck, G. (2007). Professional development risks and opportunities embodied within self-study. *Studying Teacher Education*, 3(2), 189-205.
- Merriam, S., Caffarella, R., & Baumgartner, L. (2007). *Learning in adulthood* (3rd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Morrison, M. K. (2008). *Using humour to maximize learning: The links between position emotions and education*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Education.
- Olson, J., Maio, G., & Hobden, K. (1999). The (null) effects of exposure to disparagement humor on stereotypes and attitudes. *Humor: International Journal of Humor Research*, 12(2), 195-219. doi:10.1515/humr.1999.12.2.195

- Parke, J. (2004, March). *Transformational learning and human resource development: Advances toward a knowledge based society through humor*. Paper presented at the 17th symposium of the Academy of Human Resource Development international conference, Austin, TX.
- Powers, T. (2005). Engaging students with humor. *Observer*, 18(12). Retrieved from <http://www.psychologicalscience.org/index.php/publications/observer/2005/december-05/engaging-students-with-humor.html>
- Schellenberg, G., & Maheux, H. (2008). *Immigrants' perspectives on their first four years in Canada: Highlights from three waves of the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada, 2008*. Ottawa, ON: Statistics Canada, Social and Aboriginal Statistics Division. Retrieved from <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/11-008-x/2007000/9627-eng.htm#1>
- Sev'er, A., & Ungar, S. (1997). No laughing matter: Boundaries of gender-based humour in the classroom. *Journal of Higher Education*, 68(1), 87-105.
- Shatz, M., & LoSchiavo, F. (2006). Bringing life to online instruction with humor. *Radical Pedagogy*, 8(2), 1-9. Retrieved from http://radicalpedagogy.icaap.org/content/issue8_2/shatz.html
- Struthers, J. (2011). The case of mixed methodologies in researching the teacher's use of humour in adult education. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 35(4), 439-459. doi:10.1080/0309877X.2011.584966
- Summer, D., & Omartian, M. (1983). She works hard for the money [Recorded by D. Summer]. On *She works hard for the money* [Record]. New York, NY: Mercury Records.

- Tamargo-Weaver, S., & Wilson, C. (1997). Addiction counselors can benefit from appropriate humor in the work setting. *Journal of Employment Counseling*, 34(3), doi:108-114. 10.1002/j.2161-1920.1997.tb00987.x
- Tango, R., & Kolodinsky, P. (2004). Investigation of placement outcomes 3 years after a job skills training program for chronically unemployed adults. *Journal of Employment Counseling*, 41(2), 80-92. doi:10.1002/j.2161-1920.2004.tb00881.x
- Teacher jokes. (n.d.). In “*Jokes About*” Network. Retrieved from http://www.jokesaboutteachers.net/teacher_jokes_one.html
- Teacher who made BYU joke is ejected for “initiating a riot.” (2007, March 24). *Deseret News*. Retrieved from <http://www.deseretnews.com/article/660205850/Teacher-who-made-BYU-joke-is-ejected-for-initiating-a-riot.html?pg=all>
- Terrion, J., & Ashforth, B. (2002). From “I” to “we”: The role of putdown humor and identity in the development of temporary group. *Human Relations*, 55(1), 55-87. doi:10.1177/0018726702055001606
- Torok, S. E., McMorris, R. F., & Lin, W. (1999). Is humor an appreciated teaching tool? Perceptions of professors’ teaching styles and use of humor. *College Teaching*, 52(1), 14-20. doi:10.3200/CTCH.52.1.14-20
- Vuori, J., Price, R. H., Mutanen, P., & Malmberg-Heimonen, I. (2005). Effective group training techniques in job-search training. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 10(3), 261-275.
- Wanzer, M. B., & Bainbridge Frymier, A. (1999). The relationship between student perceptions of instructor humor and students’ reports on learning. *Communication Education*, 48, 48-62. doi:10.1080/03634529909379152

Wanzer, M. B., Bainbridge Frymier, A., Wojtaszczyk, A. M., & Smith, T. (2006).

Appropriate and inappropriate uses of humor by teachers. *Communication*

Education, 55(2), 178-196. doi:10.1080/03634520600566132

Weiss, R. P. (2000). Emotion and learning. *Training & Development*, 54(11), 45-48.

White, G. W. (2000). Teachers' report of how they used humor with students perceived use of such humor. *Education*, 122(2), 337-347.

Zeynep, A., & Berry, J. W. (1996). Impact of employment-related experiences on immigrants' psychological well-being and adaptation to Canada. *Canadian*

Journal of Behavioural Science, 28(3), 240-251. doi:10.1037/0008-

400X.28.3.240

Appendix A

Resume Writing Workshop: IEP Architects



Resumes ... THE LEAST YOU NEED TO KNOW...

By: Joanna Samuels
For: JVS Newcomer
Employment Services
Date: March 25, 2013



1

Agenda



- ❖ What is the purpose of a resume?
- ❖ How to prepare a targeted resume for your career goal in architecture
- ❖ Select an appropriate resume format that suits you best.
- ❖ Q&A

2

Is this a resume?



- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pZxsxaFJ3YQ&feature=related>

Is this what Architecture looks like Canada?



- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x8fkdBz2bds>
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2h2ZixoCCWI>
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GMcQQPcECwY>
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cfm4Toxuc1A&feature=related>

The Labour Market: Has this happened to you????



Insert: Cartoon strip on the field of architecture..
Removed due to copyright protection.

The “Package” Personal Branding for your job search



- ☑ **Resume**
- LinkedIn profile
- Telephone job interview presentation
- In person job interview presentation
- Calling Card

Personal Branding



- Originally a marketing term, the notion of a “brand” can be defined as *the way a person/product or service is perceived* (i.e. their image) in the market.
- Personal branding as a tool for job searching is becoming more and more popular.
- Think of it as your reputation.
- However you wish to present yourself to potential employers or clients (and to the world) your branding statement should be **clear**, **honest** and **consistent**.

What is a resume?



Insert: Cartoon of person throwing resumes off of an office tower. Removed due to copyright protection.

The Stats



- It's estimated that only 1 percent of resumes capture the attention of a busy hiring manager. The rest end up in the NO pile. And none ever comes back from that pile. (Shapiro, 2008)

The Single Most Important Marketing Document of your Life!



- Check and re-check your resume before sending it out
 - Grammar and spelling
 - Format
 - Avoid graphics
 - **Do not use Comic Sans MS as a font**
 - Update your contact information
 - Your email address





•The purpose of a resume is:

- Your personal branding tool
- It is not to get you the job, but to get a prospective employer interested enough to want to meet you for an interview
- Provide you with content for your LinkedIn (social media) profile

11

Overview



- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qOpkOuluRxw&feature=related>
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NZa1KNsr74o&feature=related>

What do employers want to know?



Can you do the job?

What will you do for them in the future?

Will you be a good fit?

Are you actually willing to do the job?

13

What do employers want?



| | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| To make money | Be more competitive |
| To save money | Expand business |
| To save time | Build and maintain a strong customer base |
| To solve a specific problem | Build certain image |

14

3 Types of Resume

Chronological Format

Functional Format

Combined Format

15

RESUME TYPES

Chronological

PROS

Chronological resumes start by listing your work history, with the most recent position listed first. Your jobs are listed in reverse chronological order with your current, or most recent job, first.

Employers like this format because it tells them **what, where and when** you did the work. It is a good approach if your job history is steady; shows growth & development.

CONS

Not ideal format if looking for a first job or making a career change. Why? Because it reveals gaps, frequent job changes and absences form the job market.

Functional

PROS

Functional resumes focus on skills and experience, rather than on your chronological work history.

It de-emphasizes where your experience was obtained. A Functional Resume could be a good format for your **first job or a career change** and is best for those who have been absent from the job market for an extended period of time.

A Function Resume **plays down gaps** in work history and makes frequent job changes less noticeable.

CONS

Employment history is not highlighted. This format can be confusing for the reader to understand.

Combined

PROS

Combination resumes (or hybrid resumes) suit mid-career professionals and people with long work histories. They also work well for people with special skills and a strong track record of accomplishments. Combination resumes combine the best of chronological and functional resumes.

CONS

Takes longer to read because **contains both skills and work history**.

16

Analyze the Job Posting



- Analyze the job description
- What are the key core competencies and experience required
- What types of projects does the firm handle
- How are the descriptions listed
- Analyze many job descriptions
- Be honest – do you meet at least 90% of the qualifications?

An example:

<http://www.oaa.on.ca/professional+resources/classifieds/employment+opportunities/508e9075abefb41492e7ffc5/>

Resume Structure



1. Heading
2. Job Objective
3. Highlights of Qualifications
4. Work History in a Chronological Resume / Work History in a Functional Resume
5. Education
6. Volunteer Work
7. Professional Associations
8. Awards

HEADING



Frank Lloyd Wright
951 Chicago Avenue
Oak Park, IL 60302
 312-994-4000

frank@architecture.com

LinkedIn: www.franklloydwright.com/xoxoxoxoxox

Twitter: @frank

List only phone numbers where employers can leave messages and where you can speak freely.

19

JOB OBJECTIVE



- Keep your Job Objective concise and to the point.
- A targeted objective tells the employer exactly what job you are applying for.
- Don't make the employer guess what you want to do!
- Stick to what is important: Job Title; Area of Work you want to be in (eg. Architectural technologist, AutoCAD drafter).
- Different job objectives need different versions of your resume.

20

EXAMPLES



- OBJECTIVE:** Continued success in architecture
- OBJECTIVE:** A position as an AutoCAD drafter with xxx Ltd.
- OBJECTIVE:** Bilingual Architecture Professional specializing in commercial projects
- OBJECTIVE:** Architectural Technologist

21

A GOOD SUMMARY SHOULD INCLUDE:



1. **Number of years experience** → -Over 5 years experience in managing projects from drawings to detailed planning, exterior and interior finishing to achieve client satisfaction in commercial and institutional projects
2. **Key areas of knowledge within the field** →
3. **Relevant or required education, certification or training** → -Proficient in key design software including: Revit, AutoCAD, 3D modeling, V-ray, Illustrator; comfortable with hand drawing and sketching
4. **Strongest work-related skills, talents, qualities or technical knowledge** → -Familiar with Ontario Building Code
- Bachelor of Architecture, Project Management Certificate
-Understanding of materials and methods of wood frame and metal construction
5. **Soft skills - personality or attitude and how it impacts your work habits in a positive way** → -Ability to manage complex multiple projects with ease, prioritizing, multitasking and meeting tight deadlines and budget requirements.

23



Insert: Cartoon of humorous resume. Removed due to copyright protection.

BODY OF THE RESUME

24

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE CHRONOLOGICAL RESUME



Employment History

JOB TITLE

Years Worked

Company Name, City

- An accomplishment that shows you are good at this profession
- A problem you have solved and the results
- Quantifiable results that point out your skills

Project Highlights:

25

EDUCATION AND TRAINING



- **Include diplomas, degrees and certifications, courses , training sessions, and workshops**
- **Note: Indicate whether you received any scholarships and awards**

27

OPTIONAL / ADDED VALUE SECTIONS



- **Academic Accomplishments**
- **Volunteerism / Internships / Co-Ops**
- **Membership In Professional Associations**
- **Certificates / Awards / Scholarships**
- **Licenses**
- **Computer and Technical Skills**
- **Languages**
- **Publications**

28

Two ways to market yourself in your resume



Insert: Photograph images of construction projects and AutoCAD drawing. Removed due to copyright protection.

29

1. Usual task plus vivid details



- Managed 15 projects from drawings to detailed planning, exterior and interior finishing to achieve complete customer satisfaction
- Drafted designs and construction drawings and specifications of new construction and alterations on multi-use high-rise project; and prepared general layout and perspective drawings of different elevations and sections.
- Monitored construction projects to ensure that procedures, materials and equipment complied with approved project plans, specifications, and samples including owner's standards and quality

30

2. Outstanding Achievements or Accomplishments



Insert: Cartoon of an architect being interviewed for a job in AutoCAD. Removed due to copyright protection.

31

Accomplishment Statement



- An accomplishment you are proud of that shows you have this skill.
- A problem you solved using this skill and the results.
- Awards, etc. you achieved that relate your job objective.

Major Skill

- Another accomplishment that shows you have this skill.
- Quantifiable results that point out your skill.
- An occasion when someone “sat up and took notice” of your skill.

Samples



- Prepared preliminary and working drawings for hospitality projects including “Best Western Richmond Inn Hotel, Vancouver, and the Turnbury Clubhouse in Dubai
- Prepared drawings for tender and construction, including renovation of exterior elevations in major shopping mall of over 50 retail stores and restaurants
- Developed floor, power and ceiling layouts and coordinated with over 100 structural, mechanical and electrical contractors and sub-contractors that saved the company \$5 million

34

Employment Gaps



- Full-Time Parent
- Home Management
- Family Management
- Family Financial Management
- Independent Study
- Personal Travel
- Adventure Travel
- Professional Development
- Freelance Work (replace Work with the type of work you did, such as writer, artist, plumber)
- Student
- Consultant
- Contractual Work (replace Work with the type of work you did, such as administrator, accountant, hair stylist)
- Relocation from abroad
- Volunteer
- Civic Leader

Activity

- Create 2 accomplishment statements
- Select your 5 top skills (from the handout)
- Prepare 2-5 accomplishment statements for each skills
- Present (optional)



Questions???



Thank You!

Insert: Cartoon of a hiring manager interviewing a snowman. Removed due to copyright protection.

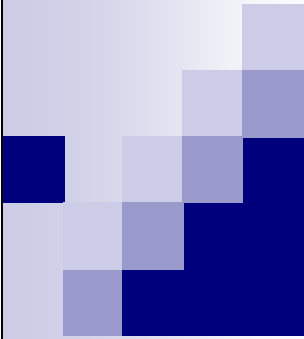



References

- Images from www.images.google.com. Free for use. No copyright permission required
- JVS Toronto (2008). *Work search strategies workshop*. JVS Toronto
- Ierullo, T. (2011). *Job search workshops, modules I and II*. Citizenship and Immigration Canada
- Shapiro, C (2008). *What Does Somebody Have to Do to Get a Job Around Here! 44 Insider Secrets and Tips that Will Get You Hired*. NY, NY: St. Martin's Griffin

Appendix B

Cold-Calling Workshop: IEP Architects



Tapping into the Hidden Job Market: Cold Calling

By: Joanna Samuels
For: IPLAN
Date: Feb 28 2013

1

Warm Up

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MI96v-bsQEk>
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=emzARZsJntw>

**Insert: Cartoon of office clerk cold calling.
Removed due to copyright protection.**

2

Agenda

- The first steps
- Research
- Analyze
- Prospect/identify
- Activity
- Q&A

3



The Nature of the Job Market


- Most jobs not advertised
- 80% of jobs found through cold-calling and networking
- 4/5ths of the job market is hidden – you can't find out about job opening unless you dig
- Only 1% of resumes capture the attention of busy hiring managers; the rest end up in the NO pile. And none ever come back from that pile (Shapiro, 2008)



Defining Networking

- How did you get a job in your own country?
- How is it different here?

5



The Toolkit – “Self-Marketing/Branding”: Are you ready?

- Resume
- Cover letter
- LinkedIn profile / Twitter / Facebook
- Interview presentation (phone & in person)
- Calling Card
- Script
- Contact tracking sheet
- Pen & Paper
- Telephone WITH PROFESSIONAL VOICEMAIL
- Mirror

6

The Preparation Steps

Insert: Cartoon of dog cold calling. Removed due to copyright protection

9

RESEARCH Definition

- The ability to investigate and search out information is a necessary tool to help you to make career decisions.
- The more knowledgeable you are about the labour market, the more likely you are to take advantage of opportunities and find success in your work search.

10

RESEARCH Companies

- **COMPILE** a list of all the companies you might be interested in working for; and/or companies and departments which could use your skills, abilities, experiences and education.
- Use directories and online databases to help find companies by your industry, your occupation, company location and any other criteria you set.

13

The Preparation Steps

- **RESEARCH**
- **RESEARCH**
- **RESEARCH**

- **COMPILE** a list of all the companies you might be interested in working for and might be interested in your skills, experience and abilities.
- **UNDERSTAND THE BUSINESS**
- **GENERATE LEADS – POTENTIAL HIRING PEOPLE**
- **Visit project sites** of targeted companies

Insert: Cartoon of receptionist answering cold calling. Removed due to copyright protection.

16

Building a Contact Network

- Start with :
 - People you know
 - People in your field
 - Decision-makers / hiring managers

20

Facing your fears

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cBtPhBs2UkU&feature=fvwrel>

**Insert: Cartoon of husband and wife
taking a risk for business.
Removed due to copyright
protection**

21

Make the cold call - Your script

- Practice
- Practice
- Practice
 - ☐ Good phone voice
 - ☐ Sound calm, professional and confident
 - ☐ Role play
 - ☐ Record voice on tape recorder/computer

22

The suggested format

- **INTRODUCTION:**
 - ☐ "Hello, Mr. Smith. My name is Alice Brooks." I am an internationally trained architect / project manager / project co-ordinator".
 - ☐ Whenever possible, mention a referral name or use a mutual contact's name here, if you have one. Example: *"I've just been talking to John Brown and he suggested that I call you."*
- **LEAD STATEMENT:**
 - ☐ "I understand you specialize in....(talk about relevant project(s))
 - ☐ OR "I understand your company is planning a major project/expansion and may be looking for someone to prepare the drawings.
- **BODY:**
 - ☐ "I have worked as an Architect for ABC Company. Prior to that, I was employed by XYZ Inc. – 5 years as an AutoCAD technician and 3 years as a Designer of commercial projects including shopping malls. In both jobs, I significantly increased client accounts and the firms' reputation in the industry. "
- **CLOSE:**
 - ☐ Would you have any interest in someone with these skills, abilities, experience?"
 - ☐ Do you need any help with your ____ project at this time?

27

If Yes??? If Not? The response

If the answer is yes, arrange a convenient time to meet.

- “Would this week on Tuesday or Thursday be a good time to meet?”

If the answer is no, ask (some or combination of these questions):

“May I send you my resume and call again in a few weeks?”

“Perhaps you know of other companies that may be looking for someone with my skills?”

“Do you know of other companies in the area who are hiring people in my field?”

“May I meet with you, however, to discuss the services I have to offer in case a position becomes vacant in the future... for about 10 minutes perhaps?”

“I’ll be in your neighbourhood this week, would you mind if I dropped my resume by in person and introduced myself to you”.

28

How to handle objections and problems

- The receptionist
- Not hiring now
- Voicemail
- Hiring manager unavailable
- When they don’t call back

Insert: Cartoon of cat owner responding to cold call. Removed due to copyright protection.

29

Activity

- Select company/job
- Create your own cold calling script
- Role Play
- Present to Group
- Feedback

31



33



References

Images from www.images.google.com. Free for use. No copyright permission required.

Ierullo, T. (2011). *Job search workshops, modules I and II*. Citizenship and Immigration Canada

JVS Toronto (2008). *Work search strategies workshop*. JVS Toronto

Shapiro, C (2008). *What does somebody have to do to get a job around here! 44 insider secrets and tips that will get you hired*. NY, NY: St. Martin's Griffin

Appendix C

Workshop Evaluation Form



WORKSHOP EVALUATION

Record your agreement or disagreement with the following statement on a 1 to 5 scale
 5=Strongly agree 4=Agree 3=No opinion 2= Disagree 1=Strongly Disagree

| | | | | | | |
|-----|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | I found the workshop well organized | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. | I found workshop informative | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. | I found workshop fun and entertaining | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. | I gained useful skills from the workshop | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. | The written material is informative | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. | The humorous clips, cartoons and comics helped me with my learning | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. | The facilitator was: | | | | | |
| | (a) well prepared | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| | (b) worked well with the group | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| | (c) was entertaining | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. | The part(s) of the workshop I liked best were _____ | | | | | |
| 9. | The part(s) of the workshop I liked least were _____ | | | | | |
| 10. | One of the most important things I learned from this workshop was _____ | | | | | |
| 11. | Other suggestions. _____ | | | | | |

Thank you for your cooperation!

Date: _____

Facilitator: _____